THE DUCHESS OF PADUA

AND

SALOME

By OSCAR WILDE

SCIEN CILLA
TIA·AN FIDEI

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA

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BY

OSCAR WILDE

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Duchess of Padua

CHARACTERS.

SIMONE GESSO, *Duke of Padua.*
BEATRICE, *his wife.*
ANDREA POLLAJUOLO, *Cardinal of Padua.*
MAFFIO PETRUCCI,
JEPPO VITELLOZZO, } *Courtiers of the Duke.*
TADDEO BARDI,
GUIDO FERRANTI.
ASCANIO CRISTOFANO, *his friend.*
COUNT MORANZONE.
BERNARDO CAVALCANTI, *Chief Judge of Padua.*
HUGO, *the executioner.*
LUCIA, *waiting woman.*
Servants, Citizens, Soldiers, Falconers, Monks, etc.

PLACE—*Padua.*

TIME—*The second half of the sixteenth century.*

ACT I.—*Market-place in Padua.*
ACT II.—*Room in the ducal palace.*
ACT III.—*Corridor in the ducal palace*
ACT IV.—*Court of justice.*
ACT V.—*Prison.*

THE DUCHESS OF PADUA

ACT FIRST.

Market-place in Padua. In the background the cathedral, built in the Romanesque style of black and white marble. A marble staircase leads to the portal of the building. At the foot of the steps are two huge stone lions. The houses at both sides of the stage have gay awnings before the windows and are enclosed by stone arcades. At the right is the fountain, representing a sea god in green bronze reclining on a couch, blowing a horn. Around the fountain is a stone bench. The bells of the cathedral are ringing, and the citizens, men, women and children, are flocking in.

GUIDO FERRANTI AND ASCANIO CRISTOFANO.

ASCANIO. As sure as I live, Guido, I won't go a step farther, or my breath will fail—for cursing. Such a damnable will o' the wisp wandering! (*Sits on the bench by the fountain.*)

GUIDO. It must be here. (*Lifting his cap, he*

speaks to a passer-by.) Pardon me, sir; is this the market-place and yonder the church of Santa Croce? (*Citizen nods.*) I thank you.

ASCANIO. Well?

GUIDO. Yes, it is here.

ASCANIO. I would it were somewhere else, for I see no tavern.

GUIDO (*takes a letter from his pocket and reads*). Time—noonday, City—Padua, Place—market, Day—St. Philip's.

ASCANIO. And the man? How shall we recognize him?

GUIDO (*goes on reading*). "I shall wear a violet mantle, on whose shoulder is embroidered a silver falcon——" a rich garment, Ascanio.

ASCANIO. I would rather have my leather jerkin. And do you believe he will tell you of your father?

GUIDO. Certainly. Have you forgotten, it is barely a month ago that I was in Weinberg, at the corner of the street where the goats always come in, when a man rode up the highway and asked me if my name was Guido. He gave me this letter, with the signature: "Your father's friend." In it I was commanded to come here to-day, if I desired to know the secret of my birth. I have always believed old Pietro to be my uncle, but the letter stated this was not so.

I had only been committed, in my childhood, to his care, by one whom he had never seen again.

ASCANIO. So you don't know who your father is?

GUIDO. No.

ASCANIO. Have not even a remembrance of him?

GUIDO. None, Ascanio, none.

ASCANIO (*laughing*). Then you can't have had your ears boxed by him as often as I have by my father.

GUIDO (*smiling*). And of course you never deserved the cuffs.

ASCANIO. Never, that was the worst of it; not even the consciousness of guilt swelled my breast. What hour did he appoint?

GUIDO. Noon. (*The cathedral clock strikes*).

ASCANIO. That time has come now, and your man is not yet here. I don't believe in him, Guido; it's probably some girl who has cast an eye upon you. I've followed you from Perugia to Padua—as sure as I live, now you shall follow me to the nearest tavern. (*Rises.*) By the great gods of the stomach, Guido, I'm as wild for food as a widow for a husband, as tired of running as a girl of being lectured on virtue, and as dry as a church sermon. Come, Guido, you stand there staring into vacancy like an idiot

who would like to peer into his own skull. Your man isn't coming.

GUIDO. I fear you are right. Ha! (*Just as he is preparing to go with Ascanio, Count Moranzone appears in a violet mantle, on whose shoulder is embroidered a silver falcon. He crosses the stage to the cathedral and, as he is about to enter, Guido runs up the steps and touches him.*)

MORANZONE. Guido Ferranti, you are punctual.

GUIDO. Does my father live?

MORANZONE. Yes, he lives—in you. In features, bearing, walk, and outward man you resemble him. I hope you also have his noble nature.

GUIDO. Tell me about my father! I have lived solely for this one moment.

MORANZONE. Let us be alone.

GUIDO. This is my most faithful friend, who for my sake has come with me to Padua; there is no secret which we do not share like brothers.

MORANZONE. There is *one* secret which you must not confide in him. So bid him go.

GUIDO (*to Ascanio*). Return in an hour. He does not know that nothing in the world can dim the flawless mirror of our love. So, in an hour.

ASCANIO. Don't talk with him; he has the evil eye.

GUIDO (*laughing*). No, no; I have no doubt that he will tell me I am some great noble in Italy, and that long days of joy await us. In an hour, dearest friend. (*Exit Ascanio.*) Now, tell me of my father. (*Sits down on the stone bench.*) Was he tall? I'm sure that he sat high upon his horse. Was his hair black? Perhaps 'twas reddish gold, as fire glistens. Was his voice low? Brave heroes sometimes have low tones of voice. Or was it like the clang of the war trumpets that scatter foemen's ranks? Did he ride alone, or was he followed by bands of shield-bearers and valiant troopers? Often I have fancied that royal blood flows in my veins. Was he a king?

MORANZONE. He was the kingliest of men.

GUIDO (*proudly*). Then, when you saw him last, my noble father towered high above other men?

MORANZONE. He towered high above the heads of all men (*goes to Guido and lays his hand on his shoulder*) upon the scaffold, where his neck awaited the headman's axe.

GUIDO (*starting up*). Who are you, terrible man, who, like the raven, the spectral screech-owl, comes with this message of sorrow from the grave?

MORANZONE. I am known as Count Moranzone, lord of a desolate castle among the cliffs, with a few acres of barren land and a small train of servants; but I was once foremost of Parma's nobles; nay, more than that, I was your father's friend.

GUIDO (*clasping his hand*). Tell me about him!

MORANZONE. You are the son of Lorenzo, the great Duke, whose standard waved on many a hard-fought field in war against the unbelieving Saracens. He was the Prince of Parma and the Duke of the whole beautiful realm of Lombardy as far as Florence; nay, Florence herself was tributary to——

GUIDO. Come to his death!

MORANZONE. You'll hear it soon enough. He was at war—O noble warriors who would never tolerate injustice in Italy—he was leading the chosen flower of knighthood against the Lord of Rimini, the adulterer, Giovanni Malatesta—may God punish him—and was treacherously lured by him into an ambush, fettered like a slave and, like a scoundrel, like a base-born hind, slain on the public scaffold.

GUIDO (*grasping his dagger*). And Malatesta lives?

MORANZONE. No; he is dead.

GUIDO. Dead, did you say? Oh, all too nimble Death, hadst thou but waited a brief time for me, I would have filled your office.

MORANZONE (*clutching his wrist*). You can do so still! The man who sold him is yet alive.

GUIDO. Sold? My father sold?

MORANZONE. Bartered like an ox; betrayed for a large reward, exchanged, bargained for in a secret market by him whom he believed a model friend, in whom he trusted, whom he treasured in his heart, bound to him by the ties of kindness. He who sows kindness on this earth will reap only ingratitude.

GUIDO. And the man who sold him lives!

MORANZONE. I will take you to him.

GUIDO. So you live, Judas? Well, I'll make the world your potter's field. Buy it at once, for you must hang there.

MORANZONE. Judas, did you say? Yes, Judas in treachery, but he was more crafty than Judas, for thirty pieces of silver seemed to him too small a price.

GUIDO. How much was given for my father's head?

MORANZONE. How much? Why, cities, fiefs, principalities, vineyards, provinces!

GUIDO. Of which he shall keep only six feet to rot in. Where is the accursed scoundrel—

where? Show me the man and, though he were mailed in steel from head to foot, cased and enclosed in armor, nay, even if he were defended by a thousand troopers, I'll strike him through their wall of spears and see the last drops of his black heart's blood trickle from my blade. The man,—I'll make him cold!

MORANZONE (*calmly*). Do you call *that* vengeance, fool? Death is the earthly lot of all men, and if he comes suddenly, that is a gain. (*Goes close to Guido.*) Your father was sold—let that be your watchword. You must sell the seller! You must serve at his court, must eat the same bread with him, at the same table——

GUIDO. Oh, bitter bread!

MORANZONE. Your palate is too delicate; vengeance will sweeten it. In the evening you must be his boon companion at the drinking bouts, his bosom friend, that he may cling to you, love you, confide to you all his intrigues. If he bids you be merry, laugh; if he chooses a serious mood, put on weeds of woe. When the time is ripe— (*Guido grasps his sword*). No, no, I will not trust you; your hot blood, your unbridled nature, your youth will not wait for this vengeance, but shatter it by your fury.

GUIDO. You do not know me. Name the man. I will follow your counsel in every point.

MORANZONE. When the time is at hand, the victim lulled to sleep, the hour favorable, then I will secretly send you by a swift messenger a sign.

GUIDO. Tell me, how is he to die?

MORANZONE. You must that night climb to his sleeping room—mark this well!

GUIDO. Have no fear!

MORANZONE. I do not know whether the guilty sleep, but if he does, first wake him and seize him by the throat—so, do you see? And when you have told him whose blood runs in your veins, whose son you are, and what is the meaning of your vengeance, then let him, if he pleads, beg you for mercy. Let him offer you treasures for his life, and when he has stripped himself of all his gold, tell him, "I need no gold, I know no mercy," and straightway do your duty. Now, swear that you will not murder him till I command, or I will go back home and leave you ignorant, your father unavenged.

GUIDO. I swear it to you by my father's banner——

MORANZONE. The executioner tore it to tatters in the public market place.

GUIDO. By my father's grave——

MORANZONE. By what grave? Your noble father rests within no grave. His dust was scat-

tered in the air, his ashes were whirled by the wind through the city like the chaff that stings the beggars' eyes. His head was impaled outside the prison, adorned in mockery with a paper crown, that the insolent mob might jeer at his features.

GUIDO. Was it so? By my father's stainless name, by the basely cruel manner of his death, by his friend's shameless villainy—by all these I swear I will not lay hands upon his life till you command, then—God protect his soul, for he shall die far worse than any dog. And now the sign?

MORANZONE. This dagger, my son, your father's dagger.

GUIDO. Oh, let me look at it! Now I remember that my supposed uncle, the good old man, spoke of a cloak—I was wrapped in it when an infant—on which two such leopards were embroidered in gold. I like them better in steel, like these; they suit their purpose more aptly. Tell me, my lord, have you no message from my father?

MORANZONE. You never saw your father, my son. When his false friend had betrayed him, I alone of all his nobles escaped to bear the news to the Duchess of Parma.

GUIDO. Tell me of my mother!

MORANZONE. Your mother—no saint was purer—fell fainting at the tidings, was prematurely seized with the pangs of childbirth—she had been married only seven months—and brought you into the world before the time. Then her soul flew heavenward to receive your father at the gate of paradise.

GUIDO. My mother dead, my father offered for sale! I feel as if I stood upon an encircling wall, and messenger after messenger approached bringing bad news; let me take breath, my ears are weary.

MORANZONE. When your mother died, fearing our foes, I spread the rumor that you had died too; then, carrying you away, I took you to a faithful servant who lives at Perugia. You know the rest.

GUIDO. Did you see my father again?

MORANZONE. Yes, once. In the shabby garments of a vine-dresser I stole to Rimini.

GUIDO (*clasping his hand*). Oh, noble heart!

MORANZONE. Everything is for sale in Rimini. I bought his guards! When your father heard that a son was born to him, his face shone brightly underneath his helmet like the distant glow of firelight on the sea. Clasping my hands, he besought me to rear you to be worthy of him

—I did so. Now revenge his death on the false friend!

GUIDO. In my father's place, I thank you for it. Now the name?

MORANZONE. How you remind me of him! In every movement you resemble him.

GUIDO. The scoundrel's name!

MORANZONE. You shall learn it presently. The Duke is already on the way here with his court.

GUIDO. What does this mean? His name!

MORANZONE. Do you not think they are a valiant band of honorable, stately gentlemen?

GUIDO. The name, Count! (*The Duke of Padua appears, with Count Bardi, Maffio, Petrucci, and other gentlemen of his court.*)

MORANZONE (*quickly*). The man before whom I kneel is your father's murderer. Pay heed!

GUIDO (*gripping his dagger*). The Duke!

MORANZONE. Loose your fingers from the steel! Do you forget so soon? (*Kneels before the Duke.*) My noble lord!

DUKE. I greet you, Count Moranzone; it is long since we have seen you in Padua. We hunted yesterday near your castle—do you call it castle? That dreary house where you sit mumbling over your rosary and confessing like a

good old man. I shall probably never be a good old man. God would weary of the confession of my sins. (*Sees Guido and starts.*) Who is this?

MORANZONE. My sister's son, Your Grace. Being now old enough to bear arms, he would like to remain for a time at court.

DUKE (*still gazing at Guido*). What is his name?

MORANZONE. Guido Ferranti, my lord.

DUKE. From what city?

MORANZONE. He comes from Mantua.

DUKE (*approaching Guido*). You have the eyes of a man I knew, but he died childless. You wish to serve me; soldiers are needed. Are you honorable, youth? Then, don't practice usury on me with your honor. Keep it for yourself. In Padua reputation is deemed braggadocio, so it is out of fashion. Just look at these gentlemen! They smell of amber and sweet perfumes.

BARDI (*aside*). The poisoned arrow is evidently aimed at us.

DUKE. Each man whom you see yonder has his price, though—to be just—some of them are dear.

BARDI (*aside*). I suspected it.

DUKE. So don't be honorable. Singularity is not conducive to advancement, though in our

shallow, insipid times the most extraordinary thing a man can do is to be sensible, for then the populace jeers at him. Scorn the mob as I do! Their praise is froth, and their vain favor I despise; popularity with the people is the one affront I have never known.

MAFFIO (*aside*). He'll not lack hatred, if he needs it.

DUKE. Be wise; in your dealings with the world tame your ardor! Think twice! The first suggestion is usually good.

GUIDO (*aside*). A toad sits on his lips and scatters its venom from them.

DUKE. See that you have enemies, or the world will set no special value on you. It considers them a sign of power. But show the smiling mask of friendship to every one until you have him firmly in your grasp. Then crush him!

GUIDO (*aside*). O wise philosopher! You are digging a deep pit for yourself.

MORANZONE (*to Guido*). Do you note his words?

GUIDO. Only too well.

DUKE. Be not too conscientious either; the hand which is clean but empty offers a pitiable spectacle. If you desire the lion's share of life, wear a fox's skin. It will fit you; it is a coat that fits every man—the fat and the lean, the tall

and the short; whoever makes such a coat for you is a tailor who will never lack customers.

GUIDO. I will remember it, Your Grace.

DUKE. Right, my boy, right! I want no shallow fools around me, who weigh life's gold with sordid scruples and move with wavering, uncertain tread. Failure is the only crime I know not. Let me have men about me. And conscience is but a name which renegade Cowardice scrawls upon his shield. Have you understood, boy?

GUIDO. Yes, Your Grace; I'll follow your counsel in everything.

MAFFIO. I never found Your Grace so much inclined to preach. The Cardinal must look to his laurels.

DUKE. My gospel is practiced by the world; his is prated. I care little for the Cardinal, though he may be a pious churchman, and do not deny his tediousness. Well, then, from to-day we will number you among our courtiers. (*He holds out his hand for Guido to kiss. Guido starts back in horror, but at a gesture from Count Moranzone, kneels and kisses it.*) Henceforth you shall be equipped as becomes our court and your rank.

GUIDO. I heartily thank Your Grace.

DUKE. Once more, what was your name?

GUIDO. Guido Ferranti, my lord.

DUKE. From Mantua? Take heed to your wives, now such a handsome gallant has come to Padua. You have good cause to laugh, Count Bardi, for I know how carefree is the man beside whose hearth a charmless woman sits.

MAFFIO. By your leave, Your Grace, the women of Padua are proof against suspicion.

DUKE. Are they all ugly? Come! The Cardinal is keeping our devout wife a long time; his sermon and his beard ought to be cut. Will you attend us, Count, and listen with us to a text from Hieronymus?

MORANZONE (*bowing*). My lord, unfortunately——

DUKE (*interrupting him*). I'll spare you the excuse if you want to miss the mass. Now, come. (*Exit with his train into the cathedral.*)

GUIDO (*after a pause*). My father was the Duke's victim, and I kissed his hand.

MORANZONE. In future, do so often!

GUIDO. Must I?

MORANZONE. Yes! You have taken an oath.

GUIDO. It will turn me to stone.

MORANZONE. Farewell, my son; you will not see me again until the time has come.

GUIDO. Let it be soon, I beseech you.

MORANZONE. I shall be on the spot when the hour is at hand. Be ready.

GUIDO. Fear nothing.

MORANZONE. Here is your friend. Banish him from Padua and your heart.

GUIDO. From Padua, yes; from my heart, no.

MORANZONE. Yes, at once. I will not leave you until you have done it.

GUIDO. Will you grant me no friend?

MORANZONE. Take vengeance for your friend. You need no other.

GUIDO. Well, then, be it so! (*Ascanio Cristofano enters.*)

ASCANIO. Guido, I've stolen a march on you in everything. I've drunk a bottle of wine, eaten a pasty, and kissed the waitress. You look as melancholy as a schoolboy who can't buy himself an apple, or a politician who can't sell his vote. What news is there, Guido?

GUIDO. Ascanio, we two must bid each other farewell.

ASCANIO. That would certainly be news, but it isn't true.

GUIDO. Too true, Ascanio; you must go now, and never look upon my face again.

ASCANIO. No, no; you really do not know me, my Guido. Though I am only a plain farmer's son, ill-trained in courtly manners, I can still,

if your birth is noble, be your serving man. I will be more faithful than any hireling.

GUIDO (*clasping his hand*). Ascanio! (*Sees Moranzone's threatening glance and lets Ascanio's hand fall.*) It cannot be.

ASCANIO. What, is that your feeling? I thought the loyal friendship of the ancient world was not yet dead, that the Roman model still found its counterpart in our shallow, commonplace times. By this love, which flows as placidly as the sea in summer, may I not share whatever fate has fallen to your lot?

GUIDO. Share?

ASCANIO. Yes!

GUIDO. No, no.

ASCANIO. Has any heritage come to you—a castle with turrets or piles of gold?

GUIDO (*bitterly*). Yes, I have entered into my inheritance. Oh, bloody legacy; Oh, cruel fate! I must guard it as anxiously as a miser, and keep it for myself. So, I entreat you, leave me.

ASCANIO. What? Shall we never again sit hand in hand as in the days of old, so absorbed in some ancient book of chivalry that head pressed head? Shall we never again steal out of school and follow the huntsmen in the autumn through the forests, see the falcons as they loose

them from the thong when the hare springs from the thicket?

GUIDO. Never again.

ASCANIO. Must I leave you without one kind word?

GUIDO. Leave me; may love follow you.

ASCANIO. Your conduct is unknightly—base.

GUIDO. Unknightly, base—if you choose. Why waste unnecessary words? Farewell!

ASCANIO. Have you no word of kindness, Guido?

GUIDO. No. Everything lies behind me like a dream. To-day my life begins. Farewell!

ASCANIO. Farewell! (*Exit slowly.*)

GUIDO. Well, are you satisfied now? Did you not see how I thrust from me my friend, my dearest comrade, as if he were some scullion? Oh, that I should do it! Are you not content *now?*

MORANZONE. I am. Now my way leads me back to my desolate fortress in the mountains. Remember the sign—your father's dagger, and when I send it to you, do the deed!

GUIDO. You may be sure of that. (*Exit Count Moranzone.*) Oh, thou eternal Heaven, if there still lingers in my soul one touch of nature, of fair compassion, of sweet friendship, let it wither, sear and destroy it, for if thou dost not,

I myself must cut pity from my heart with the sharp edge of steel, must strangle mercy at night, mid sleep, that she may not speak. Vengeance is the watchword! Be thou my bedfellow, my comrade; sit thou beside me, ride to the hunt with me; when I am weary sing to me beautiful songs, and when I am cheerful jest with me, and when I dream whisper into my ear the horrible tidings of my father's murder—did I say murder? (*Draws his dagger.*) Oh, hear me, God of Terror, who dost punish all perjury; let angels inscribe in characters of flame this oath, that henceforth, until I have expiated with blood my father's murder, I solemnly renounce the noble bonds of honorable friendship, the noble joys of social intercourse, the ties of affection and loyal gratitude; nay, more—from this hour I renounce the love of women and the idle toy called beauty. (*The organ in the cathedral peals forth. Beneath a canopy embroidered in silver, borne by four scarlet-clad pages, the Duchess of Padua descends the steps; as she passes her eyes meet Guido's a moment, and as she leaves the stage she glances back at him; the dagger falls from his hand.*) Tell me, who is that?

A Citizen. The Duchess of Padua!

ACT II.

Magnificent room in the ducal palace. The tapestries on the walls represent the procession of Venus. A wide doorway in the center leads to a colonnade with red marble pillars, through which is a view of Padua. At the right a large canopy above three thrones, one of which stands somewhat lower than the other two. The ceiling is ornamented with long, gilded rays. Furniture in the style of the times; the chairs are covered with gilt leather, the sideboards are filled with gold and silver utensils, and the chests are painted with mythological scenes. A number of courtiers are standing in the colonnade outside, looking down into the street, from which rises the roar of a mob and shouts of "Down with the Duke." After a short interval the Duke enters very calmly. He is leaning on Guido Ferranti's arm. The Cardinal enters with him. The outcry still continues.

DUKE. No, Cardinal, I am utterly weary of her, for she is even worse than ugly—good.

MAFFIO (*excitedly*). Two thousand people, Your Highness, have assembled, and are shouting more insolently every moment.

DUKE. Pshaw, they are wasting the strength of their lungs! Those who roar so loudly, gentlemen, will do us no harm. The only malcontents I fear are the quiet ones. (*Howls of the populace.*) See how my people love me, Cardinal; they are giving me a serenade which I would rather hear than the most fanciful melodies on the lute. Is it not a delight to listen to it? (*Renewed cries.*) A pity that they have dropped a little out of time; my soldiers ought to shoot them for it. I can't endure caterwauling. Petrucci, go tell the captain of our guards below to clear the square. Is your hearing bad? Do what I order. (*Exit Petrucci.*)

CARDINAL. I beseech Your Grace, listen to their misery!

DUKE (*seating himself on the throne*). Yes, yes, the pears to-day are by no means as large as usual. Pardon me, Cardinal, I thought you were speaking of pears. (*Shouts of joy from the people.*) What is that?

GUIDO (*rushes to the window*). The Duchess is in the square; she has stepped between the soldiers and the populace to prevent the firing.

DUKE. The devil!

GUIDO (*still at the window*). Now, with a dozen citizens, she is just entering the palace.

DUKE (*starting up*). The Duchess, by heaven, is presuming a great deal!

BARDI. She is coming.

DUKE. Shut that door; the morning air is cold. (*The door leading to the colonnade is closed. The Duchess enters with a group of shabbily dressed citizens.*)

BEATRICE (*throwing herself upon her knees*). I beseech Your Grace to hear us.

DUKE. Am I a tailor, noble lady, that you appear before me with such a ragged rabble?

BEATRICE. The rags, I think, should proclaim their want more eloquently than I can do.

DUKE. In what does the want consist?

BEATRICE. Alas, my husband, common things, of which neither you, nor I, nor any of these noble gentlemen need ever have even the most distant thought. The very bread they eat is baked from half-rotten chaff.

FIRST CITIZEN. Yes, nothing but chaff.

DUKE. Excellent food; I give it to my horses.

BEATRICE (*controlling herself*). And the water which fills the city cisterns has been befouled, by the breaking of the aqueducts, into swampy pools and miry puddles.

DUKE. Drink wine, for water is always unhealthy.

SECOND CITIZEN. Alas, Your Grace, the duties demanded at the city gates have grown so high that wine is not for us.

DUKE. Then praise the duties which keep you sober.

BEATRICE. Consider; we shine in pomp and splendor here, and lack for nothing which luxury and wealth can offer, with an army of servants who await every sign, while through their sunless alleys gaunt poverty steals, secretly and noiselessly piercing the warm throats of the little children with its keen knife.

THIRD CITIZEN. Yes, indeed, that's true. My little boy died last night of hunger; he was just six years old. I am so poor I cannot bury him.

DUKE. If you are poor, are you not to be called happy on that account? Why, poverty is a Christian ornament. (*To the Cardinal.*) Isn't that true? You, Cardinal, I know, have large estates, fat livings, tithes and landed property in return for preaching voluntary poverty.

BEATRICE. My noble Duke, my husband, be merciful! While we sit here within proud halls, with colonnades to shut out the sun, with walls and roofs to banish winter, there are many citizens in Padua lodged in such wretched hovels

that rain, snow, and harsh winds are constant guests. Others sleep at night in autumn under the arches of the city bridges, till the damp mist stiffens their limbs and fever comes, and then—

DUKE. They are well sheltered in Abraham's bosom. Those who are so wretched here I send to heaven. Where is their gratitude for it? (*To the Cardinal.*) Is it not written in one of the passages of Holy Scripture that each human being should be contented with the lot appointed by God? Why must I change, meddle with the work of a wise Providence? It has ordained that some should starve while others feast. The world is not my work.

FIRST CITIZEN. He has a hard heart.

SECOND CITIZEN. Keep quiet, neighbor. I hope the Cardinal will intercede for us.

CARDINAL. To bear poverty is indeed a Christian duty, for God bestows a rich recompense upon it; yet it is no less Christian to be merciful, to appease hunger and heal suffering. It seems that there are many wrongs here in this city which your wisdom should reform.

FIRST CITIZEN. What is that—to reform? What does it mean?

SECOND CITIZEN. Oh, it means to leave everything just as it is. That isn't my case.

DUKE. Reform! You, Cardinal, to talk of re-

form? There lives in Germany a man named Luther, who reformed your Roman Catholic Church. Did you not denounce him as a heretic and excommunicate him?

CARDINAL (*rising*). He led the flock out of the fold; we only ask *you* to feed the sheep.

DUKE. When I have sheared their fleece I'll feed them. But the rebels—— (*The Duchess implores him.*)

FIRST CITIZEN. Hark! One kind word, he will give us something.

SECOND CITIZEN. Do you think so?

DUKE. This ragged pack that appears before me, with mouths overflowing with treachery——

THIRD CITIZEN. Oh, noble lord, fill them with bread; then we will keep them shut.

DUKE. You shall keep them shut, hungry or full. The times have grown so comfortable for you gentry that the peasant lout scarcely lifts his cap unless he gets a drubbing, and the day-laborer jostles the nobleman on the public highway. But God has appointed me a scourge for this pack, to lash them for their sins.

BEATRICE. By what right? Are you so free from sins?

DUKE. When virtue chastises sin, it is nothing; but when sin scourges sin, God rejoices.

BEATRICE. Where is fear?

DUKE. Have I anything to dread? The foe of men, am I not the friend of God? (*To the citizens.*) Well, my good, faithful Paduans, out of regard for the entreaties of the Duchess—to refuse the petition of so fair an advocate would offend love and courtesy—I promise this to relieve your need:

FIRST CITIZEN. Now he'll lower the taxes!

SECOND CITIZEN. Or order a loaf of bread to be given to every man.

DUKE. On Sunday next, after mass, the Cardinal shall choose for his sermon the text, How beautiful is obedience! (*The citizens murmur.*)

FIRST CITIZEN. That won't fill our stomachs.

SECOND CITIZEN. A sermon is but a thin sauce, if one has nothing else.

BEATRICE. You poor people! You see, I have no influence on the Duke; but if you will go to the palace courtyard, the treasurer shall distribute from my own strong box, in which gold is not always plentiful, a hundred ducats among you.

ALMONER. A hundred ducats is all the ready money in it.

BEATRICE. Give what I have.

FIRST CITIZEN. May God guard the Duchess.

SECOND CITIZEN. God guard her!

BEATRICE. And every Monday morning bread

shall be distributed among the needy. (*Exit citizens amid signs of applause.*)

First Citizen (*as he goes out*). God guard the Duchess for the second time!

Duke (*calling him back*). Come here, fellow! What is your name?

First Citizen. Dominick, my lord.

Duke. A fine name! Why did you happen to be called Dominick?

First Citizen (*scratching his head*). Because I was born on St. George's day.

Duke. A good reason! There's a ducat for you! Now shout also: God guard the Duke!

First Citizen (*faintly*). God guard the Duke!

Duke. Louder, fellow, louder!

First Citizen (*somewhat louder*). God guard the Duke!

Duke. More joyously, varlet; put more feeling into it! Here's another ducat for you.

First Citizen (*enthusiastically*). God guard the Duke!

Duke (*scornfully*). Gentlemen, the love of this plain man touches me deeply. (*Turning angrily to the citizen.*) Begone! (*Exit citizen, bowing.*) This is the way the favor of the populace is bought in these times. Yes, we are nothing if not democratic. (*To the Duchess.*) Well,

Madame, you stir up rebellion among our citizens, and by your daily alms have cunningly won the love of the common people. I'll not permit it.

BEATRICE (*with a glance at Guido*). You are mistaken, my husband; I am not loved.

DUKE. I will not have you give bread to the poor merely because they are hungry.

BEATRICE. The poor have unassailable rights, the right to pity and the right to mercy.

DUKE. Do you argue with me? So this is the woman for whose sake I resigned three of the fairest cities of Italy, Pisa, Genoa and Orvieto.

BEATRICE. Promised, my lord, but not performed. You broke your word, as usual.

DUKE. You wrong me; there were reasons of state——

BEATRICE. What reasons can there be to break a sacred promise?

DUKE. In a forest near Pisa there are wild boars close to the city. When I promised Pisa to your confiding father I had forgotten that there was good hunting there.

BEATRICE. One who is forgetful of honor, my husband, remembers nothing else.

DUKE. In Genoa, it is said—I do not doubt it—that there are more red barbels in the har-

bor than anywhere else in this country (*To one of the courtiers.*) You, my lord, who have beheld your Baal in gluttony, might prove it to our Duchess.

BEATRICE. And Orvieto?

DUKE (*yawning*). I've forgotten now why I did not give him Orvieto, according to the wording of our contract. Perhaps I was not inclined to do it. (*Goes to the Duchess.*) Yes, look around you; here you are alone. It is many a dusty mile to France, and even there your father has at his court only a hundred beggarly knights. Do you still hope? Which of these gentlemen, the noble cavaliers of Padua, is loyal to you?

BEATRICE. Not one. (*Guido starts, but controls himself.*)

DUKE. Nor will be, so long as I am Duke of Padua. Hear me: I've had enough of your gracious manners. You are my property; you will do what I command. If I choose to keep you in the house, this palace here will be your prison, and if I choose that you shall go out, from morning till night you will be in the open air.

BEATRICE. By what right?

DUKE. The second Duchess once asked me that same question. You will see her monument in the Church of St. Bartholomew, carved in red

marble—very beautiful! Give me your arm, Guido! Gentlemen, let us cast the falcons for their noonday flight. Consider, you are alone here, noble lady (*Exit Duke, leaning on Guido, with his train.*)

BEATRICE (*looking after them*). Strange that one apparently blameless loves the Duke, hangs on his lips, which cruelly poison every word, and never leaves him, as if he belonged to him. What does it mean? I cannot understand it. I stand alone, inaccessible to love. The Duke says truly that I am alone, forsaken and dishonored, and calumniated. Was ever any woman so utterly alone as I? The wooer calls us pretty children, says we are not capable of moulding our lives, so he destroys them for us. Did I say "wooers"? We are their property, their slaves, less petted than the dog which licks them, the falcon on their wrists. Did I say "wooers"? No, sold, bartered, for our very bodies are wares to them. I know it is the usual lot of woman. Her life, yoked to an unloved husband, is shattered by his selfishness; and that it is usual makes it no less bitter. It seems to me I never heard a woman laugh, laugh from pure mirthfulness—except one. That was at night in the public street—poor soul. She had painted lips; she wore the mask of pleasure over her anguish, and

laughed. I would not wish to laugh as she did. Death would be better. (*Guido enters at back of stage unnoticed; the Duchess throws herself down before an image of the Madonna.*) Mary, with the sweet, pale face, surrounded by the little angel heads that hover about thee, knowest thou no help for me? Oh, Mother of God, knowest thou no help?

GUIDO. No, I can bear it no longer. I will speak to her, to my love. Lady, am I included in your prayer?

BEATRICE (*rising*). Only the wretched need my prayers.

GUIDO. Then in truth I need them.

BEATRICE. Why? Does not the Duke show you honor enough? Do you lack advancement at court? It is not in my power to give it to you. I have no influence here.

GUIDO. I do not lack favor from the Duke, Your Grace, whom my soul hates as it does corruption. I come upon my knees to offer you the most loyal services unto death.

BEATRICE. Alas! I have fallen so low in rank that I can reward you only with niggardly thanks.

GUIDO (*seizing her hand*). Not with love? (*The Duchess starts back; Guido falls at her feet.*) Oh, dear saint, forgive me; I have been

too bold. Your charms fire my young blood. When my lips humbly touch your hand every nerve quivers so wildly with passion that, to gain your love, I would fear nothing. (*Starts up.*) Command me to set forth and win fame from the lion's jaws. I would struggle with the Nemæan monster in the desert sands! Cast into the gulf of war a ribbon, a flower, a bit of tinsel, anything which has once touched you; I will bring it back unharmed from conflict with all the armies of Christendom. Nay, more than that, bid me climb the white cliffs of mighty England, and from her insolent shield efface the lilies of your France, which England, that lioness of the sea, has wrested from her. Oh, dear Beatrice, drive me not away, for the minutes crawl on leaden feet without you; but when I gaze at your loveliness the hours fly like winged Mercuries, and the world shines in golden radiance.

BEATRICE. I did not think I should ever be loved. Do you really love me as infinitely as you now protest?

GUIDO. Ask the seagull whether it loves the waves; ask the roses whether they love the rain; ask the lark that will not sing before the dawn whether it loves the day—and yet these are but empty images, mere shadows of my love, which

is a fire that all the waters of the ocean would not suffice to quench. Speak but one word!

BEATRICE. I scarcely know what I ought to say to you.

GUIDO. Then say that you love me!

BEATRICE. Is that the regulation? And must it be said at once? It would be well, if I did really love you; but if not, what shall I say to you then?

GUIDO. If you do not love me, still say you do, for on your tongue the lie would shame the truth.

BEATRICE. And if I remain perfectly silent? Lovers, they say, are happiest when they doubt.

GUIDO. No, doubt would kill me, and if die I must, let me die of joy, not of doubt. Oh, tell me, may I stay? Must I go?

BEATRICE. I would rather have you neither stay nor go. For if you stay, you'll steal my love from me, and if you go, you will take it with you. If all the morning stars could sing, they could not tell the measure of my love. Guido, I love you.

GUIDO (*with outstretched arms*). Oh, do not stop! I thought the nightingale sang only at night; yet if you must be silent, let my lips find yours, which sound so sweet.

BEATRICE. My lips will not give you my heart.

GUIDO. Do you shut me out from it?

BEATRICE. Oh, my master, it is mine no longer; the first day that I saw you I suffered you to steal it; a thief against my will, whom you brought recklessly into my walled treasure-house, and purloined my jewel! Strange robbery, which enriched you, without your knowing it, and left me poorer, and yet full of joy.

GUIDO (*clasping her in his arms*). Oh, love, love! Do not hide your face so! Let me open the little scarlet doors which closed in music, dive for corals, and I will bring up a richer prize than all the gold the griffin guards in the Armenian wilderness.

BEATRICE. You are my master, Guido. What I possess is yours; what I do not is lavishly bestowed by your imagination, which thus barters its treasures for baubles. (*Kisses him.*)

GUIDO. How bold I seem to myself when I thus look at you. The lovely violet hides beneath its leaves and fears to gaze at the great sun in dread of so much radiance; but my eyes, presumptuous eyes! have grown so daring that, like fixed stars, they steadfastly gaze at you, rioting in beauty.

BEATRICE. Dearest, would that you could look

at me forever! Your eyes are shining mirrors; when I gaze into them I can see myself, and know my image lives in you.

GUIDO (*taking her in his arms*). Stand still on high, ye flying celestial bodies; perpetuate this hour! (*Pause.*)

BEATRICE. Sit a little lower, just so, that my fingers may stray through your hair, that your face may lift itself like a flower to meet my kiss. Have you noticed that when a long closed room, loaded with dust and full of mould, which no human foot has entered for years, is opened, the rusty window bars taken down, and the broken blinds flung far back that sunlight may pour in, how the sun transforms every sooty particle of dust into myriads of dancing specks of gold? My heart was like that long empty room until love illumined it and invested everything with its gold. Does it not seem to you that love is life's very essence?

GUIDO. Yes; without love life is merely an unhewn block lying in the quarry, before the artist has waked the god within it. Without love, life is as silent as the common reed that grows in marshes and beside the rivers, and contains no music.

BEATRICE. Yet some day the singer, Love, will cut from it a pipe from which he will lure music;

so love conjures melody from every life. Is not that true?

GUIDO. Women make it true. Men work with brush and pencil. The dyer's son, Paolo Veronese, your great rival in Venice, who created God's lily white and slender maid ascending the temple stairs, and Raphael, who painted divine Madonnas, because they are all mother— and yet, women are the greatest artists on this earth; they model the life of men, stained by the money-seeking greed of our times, and make it beautiful through love.

BEATRICE. Ah, Guido, I wish that we were poor; the poor who love each other are so rich.

GUIDO. Say once more that you love me, Beatrice.

BEATRICE (*slipping her fingers through his collar*). How the collar nestles to your neck! (*Count Moranzone looks through the door from the outer colonnade.*)

GUIDO. No; tell me that you love me.

BEATRICE (*playfully*). The King of France was an illustrious hero, yet he was not so royal as you. Why must I confess my love? (*She takes his head between her hands and lifts his face toward hers.*) You know that I am yours forever, body and soul. (*She kisses him, suddenly sees*

Moranzone, and starts up.) Ha, what is that? (*Moranzone disappears.*)

GUIDO. What, dearest?

BEATRICE. I thought I saw fiery eyes watching us through the doorway.

GUIDO. No, it was nothing, only the sentinel's shadow gliding past. (*The Duchess still gazes at the window.*) It was nothing, my love.

BEATRICE. What can assail us now, when we are under love's protection? I should not care though the world and its lackey, calumny, should trample and crush my life. They say the common field flowers give out sweeter fragrance when they are crushed than when they bloom, and many a weed, usually scentless, diffuses in death, when it is ground to powder, the perfume of Araby. So fares the young life whom daily routine seeks to crush; it presses out all its sweetness and often increases its charm. So long as we love, we possess life's crown. Is it not so?

GUIDO. Come, let us play and sing! I feel as if I could sing now.

BEATRICE. Hush! There are times when it seems as if all life were narrowed to a single rapture of bliss, and fervor sets a seal upon the lips.

GUIDO. Let my lips break this seal! Do you love me, Beatrice?

BEATRICE. Is it not strange that I should thus love my foe?

GUIDO. Whom?

BEATRICE. You, who with your shaft have pierced my heart! This poor heart, which lived only for itself until your arrow reached it.

GUIDO. Oh, Beatrice, I am myself so wounded by this shaft that, if uncared for, it will be my death unless, beloved leech, you will heal me.

BEATRICE. I cannot give you health, for I am suffering from the same disease.

GUIDO. Oh, how I love you! I must steal the cuckoo's voice, and always sing the same note.

BEATRICE. Sing no other! If this is the cuckoo's note, the nightingale is hoarse and the lark's trill has lost its melody.

GUIDO. Kiss me, Beatrice. (*She takes his face between her hands, stoops and kisses it. Just at that moment some one knocks loudly at the door. Guido starts up. A servant enters.*)

SERVANT. A little package for you, my lord.

GUIDO (*carelessly*). Give it to me! (*The servant hands him a small packet wrapped in scarlet silk, and goes out. As Guido is in the act of opening it the Duchess steals behind him and jestingly takes it away.*)

BEATRICE (*laughing*). What will you wager that it comes from a girl? She would like to see

you in her colors. I will not grant her the smallest share in you. No, like a miser, I will have you wholly, even though I thereby spoil you.

GUIDO. It is nothing.

BEATRICE (*turns away and opens it*). Traitor, now tell me what this means. A dagger—two steel leopards on it.

GUIDO (*takes the dagger away from her*). Oh, God!

BEATRICE. I'll look out of the window. Perhaps I shall recognize by his coat of arms the messenger who gave it to the porter. I will not rest until I know your secret. (*Runs laughing out into the colonnade.*)

GUIDO. Horrible! Have I so quickly forgotten my father's death? Did I let love enter my heart so swiftly that I must now banish it and admit murder, shaking the door so savagely? I must! Have I not taken an oath? But not to-night. No, it must be to-day. Farewell, then, joy and light of life; farewell, memory of all things lovely; farewell, beloved! Can I, with bloodstained hands, stroke and caress her innocent ones? Can lips still wet from the assassination press kisses upon hers? Can a murderer's eyes gaze into her violet ones, which would strike me with blindness, so that henceforth I should

languish in eternal night? No. Murder has placed a barrier between us too high to exchange kisses.

BEATRICE. Guido!

GUIDO. Beatrice, forget, forget the name; erase it forever from your life!

BEATRICE (*approaching him*). Dearest!

GUIDO (*shrinking back*). A barrier which we dare not pass towers between us.

BEATRICE. I will dare all things, if you are only with me.

GUIDO. Ah, that is it! I cannot be with you; can no longer breathe the same air, or gaze upon your beauty; it will unnerve my wavering heart and make the feeble hand miss its mark. Let me go, I beseech you; forget you have ever seen me!

BEATRICE. What! With your burning kisses on my lips, forget the vows of love which you have uttered?

GUIDO. I will take them back.

BEATRICE. You cannot, Guido. They are a part of the elements. The air thrills with their harmony, and the bird's song sounds sweeter for those vows.

GUIDO. A barrier now towers between us, a barrier which before was forgotten or unknown.

BEATRICE. No, no barrier, Guido. I will fol-

low you in the most wretched garb to the world's end.

GUIDO (*wildly*). It is not large enough to hold us both. Farewell forever!

BEATRICE (*quietly, with repressed passion*). Why did you force yourself into my life? Why did you sow in the desert of my heart the white blossom of love?

GUIDO. Beatrice!

BEATRICE. Now you would fain uproot it, but every fiber holds my heart so firmly that if you break one my heart will break with it. Why did you come into my life? Why did you uncover the secret fountain of my love, which has so long been choked? Why?

GUIDO. Oh, God!

BEATRICE (*wringing her hands*). Why did you let your ardor burst all sluices till, as the river's waves overflow the fields and sweep along the forests, love, with the exulting power of the avalanche, tore my life with it? Must I gather up that water again, drop by drop? Alas, each drop will change into a tear, embittering my life with its salt.

GUIDO. Say nothing more, I implore you, for I must go out of your life to seek a way which is denied to you.

BEATRICE. I have heard that shipwrecked

sailors dying of thirst upon a raft, drifting in misery on the open sea, dream of green meadows and placid streams, then, with parched throats, awake and perish the more pitiably because sleep thus deceived them. So they die, cursing the sleep which deluded them in dreams. I do not curse you, though I, too, was suffering shipwreck on the sea which men call melancholy.

GUIDO. God! Oh, God!

BEATRICE. Oh, stay, Guido! Listen! I love you. (*A short pause.*) Does no echo, when I say I love you, come back to me? Is it dead?

GUIDO. All is dead except one thing, and that will die to-night.

BEATRICE. Then I must train my lips to say farewell; and yet it seems to me as if they would not learn, for when I shape them to utter it the only sound is, I love you. Must I scold them? Can one lip scold the other? Alas, they are both guilty and refuse me this word!

GUIDO. Then I must say it for them. Farewell; we can never see each other again. (*Rushes toward her.*)

BEATRICE. Go! Do not touch me—go, I tell you! (*Exit Guido.*) Never again—was it so? Never meet again? I know my duty. I will change the torch of love into the funeral flambeau, lay down the wreath of love upon my bier,

transform love's song into a dirge, and die singing, like the swan. Oh, sorrow, if thou art so enraptured by my life, why didst thou not choose another form? The mask of pain, and not the smile of love, the raven's voice, and not the nightingale's, the mole's blind eyes, not those like the summer sky, so deeply blue that we might fancy we saw God in them—then, sorrow, then I should have recognized thee. Why in the world did he speak of a barrier? No, no barrier rises between us. He lied, and therefore I must henceforth shun what I loved, hate what I idolized. We women do not love in such a way; for, though I cut his image from my heart, that heart, like a pilgrim, would follow, bleeding, his image through the world, and call it back with a low cry of love. (*The Duke enters in hunting costume, with hawks and hounds.*)

DUKE. You are keeping us and our dogs waiting.

BEATRICE. I shall not ride to-day.

DUKE. What's that?

BEATRICE. I cannot go, my husband.

DUKE. What, Milk-Face, dare you defy me? I could have you tied on a nag and baited through the streets until the people—you fed them—waved their hats and jeered at you.

BEATRICE. Will you never have one kind word for me?

DUKE. We use kind words to trap our foes. I hold you in the hollow of my hand. Why need I squander flattering phrases?

BEATRICE. Then I will come.

DUKE (*lashing his boots with his riding whip*). I have changed my mind. You will stay at home and, like a faithful wife, watch from the window for my return. Would it not be terrible if any accident should chance to befall your beloved husband? Come, gentlemen, the hounds are growing fierce, and so am I—with such a patient wife. Where is young Guido?

MAFFIO. My lord, I have not seen him for at least an hour.

DUKE. No matter; I'll see him soon enough. You, madame, will remain at home and spin. My word for it, the domestic virtues are often very praiseworthy—in other people. (*Exit Duke with his train.*)

BEATRICE. The stars are hostile to me, that is the whole matter. So to-night, when my husband is asleep, I'll use my dagger and thus end all. My heart is like a stone which nothing will mark except the dagger's edge. Let him find there the name which it hides. To-night death shall part me from the Duke; but he, too, the

old man, may die to-day. Why not? Yesterday his hand was paralyzed. Men have often died from paralysis. Why not he, too? Is there not fever, and ague, and chills, such as usually attack old age? No, no, he will not die; he is too wicked. The honorable die before their time. The good die—beside whom he, in the horrible stains upon his life, is a leper. Women and children die; the Duke does not, because he is too wicked. Can it be possible that vice has a sort of immortality unknown to virtue? Can the infamous man thrive in what is the death of other human beings, like poisonous plants which live on rottenness? No, no; God would never permit that. Yet my husband does not die; he is too wicked. So I alone will die to-night. Grim death will then my bridegroom be, the grave my secret chamber of joy. The world is a churchyard, and each one bears a skeleton within as a coffin. (*Count Moranzone enters, clad wholly in black; he crosses the back of the stage, looking anxiously around him.*)

MORANZONE. Guido! Where is he? I can find him nowhere.

BEATRICE (*perceiving him*). Oh, God, it was you who took my lover away from me.

MORANZONE (*with sparkling eyes*). What, has he deserted you?

BEATRICE. You know it! Give him back to me; oh, give him back to me, or I will have your body torn limb from limb, and your head nailed to the pillory until the vultures have stripped it. You had better have crossed the path of the lioness than to have come between the man I love and me. (*With increasing passion.*) Give him back to me. You do not know how I love him. Just now he was kneeling beside this chair; here he stood, there he gazed at me and kissed this hand, plundered these lips with his, and into the wide open portals of these ears dropped a song of love, so full of yearning that the birds around were silent. Give him back to me!

MORANZONE. He does not love you.

BEATRICE. May the plague wither your tongue which speaks so! Give him back to me!

MORANZONE. You will never see him again, lady; neither to-night nor any other night.

BEATRICE. What is your name?

MORANZONE. My name? Vengeance! (*Exit.*)

BEATRICE. Vengeance! I never harmed even a little child. What does vengeance seek at my door? No matter, death is already standing there, waiting to light my pathway with his gloomy torch. 'Tis true men hate you, death, but to me you will be fairer than my lover. So send your messengers at once; urge on the laggard

steeds of lingering day, and bid thy sister, night, draw near. Muffle the world in black, and bid thy priest, the owl, hoot from his tower, the toads croak, and the bat, the slave of mournful Persephone, whirr through the darkness on wavering wings. Uproot the shrieking mandrakes, that they may play for us the measures of the dance, and bid the mole to hollow deep the cold and narrow couch, for I shall sleep within thine arms to-night.

ACT III.

A wide corridor in the Duke's palace. At the left a view of Padua in the moonlight. At the right a staircase leads to a door, before which hangs a crimson velvet portière, on which the ducal coat of arms is embroidered in gold. On the lowest step of the stairs sits a black-robed figure. The passage is lighted by an iron pan in which tow is burning. Lightning and thunder. (*Guido climbs in through the window.*)

GUIDO. The storm is rising. How my ladder trembled! At every gust I thought the ropes would tear! (*Looks back at the city.*) Omnipotent God, what a night! In the heavens the roar of thunder and sharp flashes of lightning, which dart through the city from spire to spire so that the houses shake and seem to shudder, when another flash quivers along the streets. (*He crosses the stage to the foot of the stairs.*) Ha! Who are you, watching on these steps like death for a guilty soul? (*Pause.*) Are you mute? Has this storm paralyzed your tongue and frozen

your speech? Begone, for I have something to do in yonder room which no one can do for me. (*The figure rises and removes the mask.*)

MORANZONE. Guido Ferranti! Your dead father is rejoicing to-night.

GUIDO (*bewildered*). What, you are here!

MORANZONE. I was waiting for your arrival.

GUIDO (*looking away from him*). I did not expect you, but I am glad that I can tell you my purpose.

MORANZONE. First, learn my plans! Listen! Horses are already waiting at the gate leading to Parma. When you have performed your office we will ride hence. To-morrow night, if our horses hold out well, we shall be in Parma. There the old friends of your great father, the friends who long ago stirred up the insurrection among the citizens, are informed. By money and promises I have won over to us many who are still courtiers of the usurping Duke. Once he is dead, the soldiers can soon be brought to rebellion, and you will then ascend your father's throne as Parma's rightful lord.

GUIDO. It cannot, cannot be.

MORANZONE. It shall!

GUIDO. Now hear me, Count Moranzone. I have determined not to kill the Duke.

MORANZONE. Say that again! My ear has be-

fooled me; age has dulled my hearing. I shall soon be an old man. What did you say? With the dagger in your belt you would revenge your father's bloody murder. That is what you said?

GUIDO. No, my lord. I said I had determined not to kill the Duke.

MORANZONE. Impossible! My senses cheat me, or the midnight tempest changes your meaning while you speak.

GUIDO. You heard aright. I will not kill the man.

MORANZONE. And what, traitor, of your oath?

GUIDO.. I have resolved to break this oath!

MORANZONE. And what of your father's murder?

GUIDO. Do you think my father would rejoice to see the old man's smoking blood upon my hands?

MORANZONE. Yes, he would laugh with joy.

GUIDO. Not so. The other world has better knowledge; vengeance is God's; leave it to God.

MORANZONE. You are the tool of God's vengeance.

GUIDO. No! God has no tool save His own hand. I will not kill the man.

MORANZONE. If you will not, why are you here?

GUIDO. Count Moranzone, I will make my

way into the Duke's chamber, lay on the sleeper's breast this dagger and this paper. When he wakes he'll learn in whose hands he was, who spared him. That is the noblest vengeance for me.

MORANZONE. You will not kill him?

GUIDO. No!

MORANZONE. Ignoble scion of the noblest father, to grant even one hour longer to the man who sold him.

GUIDO. You prevented me, or I would have killed him in the open market-place the day I saw him.

MORANZONE. Then the time had not come; now it has, and, like a girl, you prate of mercy.

GUIDO. No, of the just vengeance which befits my father's son.

MORANZONE. Unhappy father, betrayed a second time by your own son! You are a coward, else draw your blade, burst into the Duke's room, and bring me back his heart upon the sword. When he is dead you can talk with me of noble vengeance.

GUIDO. Hear me! By your honor, by your love for my father's name, do you believe my father, that great noble, the brave hero, the knightly warrior, would like a thief have stolen in

at night and stabbed an old man in his bed, even though he had been his worst enemy? Speak!

MORANZONE (*after a little delay*). You took an oath; you must perform it! Do you think I do not know your secret, the affair with the Duchess?

GUIDO. Stop, you liar! The moon herself is not so chaste, the stars are not so pure.

MORANZONE. And yet you love her, you weak fool.

GUIDO. Yes, it is easy for you to talk. Youth does not surge hotly in your veins, old man. Your bleared eye has barred its black-draped doors against beauty; your ear, dulled and robbed of its former keenness, is closed to this world's music. You talk of love, and know not what it is.

MORANZONE. I, too, my boy, have wandered in the moon, vowed to die of longing, and did not die. I, too, by instinct have boldly rhymed love in bad verses to zithers out of tune, as lovers do. I know the intrigues, the wild joy of the revel and the camp. At heart we are all animals—love is but the flame of sensuality with a sacred name.

GUIDO. Now I know that you have no knowledge of love. Love is the sacrament of life; it conjures virtue out of an empty void and purifies us from all the base refuse of this world. It is

the fire which frees gold from dross, the paddle which winnows the chaff from the wheat, the spring which calls the rosebuds of innocence from the frozen earth. God henceforth does not walk with man. His image, Love, goes in His place. The man who loves a woman knows the secret of the Creator and the world. There is no hut so mean and miserable that, if the dwellers' hearts are pure, love shuns it; but if cruel murder knocks at the palace gate and finds admission, then wounded love creeps away and dies. This is God's punishment for sin. The wicked cannot love. (*Groans are heard from the Duke's sleeping chamber.*) What is that? Did you hear it?

MORANZONE. It was nothing.

GUIDO. I believe woman's mission is to save men's souls by the power of love. Love for my Beatrice taught me to see a more majestic, holier vengeance in sparing the Duke than in a deed of blood at night, in sinister murder, when the strong hands of youth slay an old man. Was it not for love's sake that Christ, who Himself was Love incarnate, admonished men to forgive their enemies?

MORANZONE (*scornfully*). That was in Palestine, not in Padua—meant for saints. I side with men.

GUIDO. It is for every age.

MORANZONE. In what does the Duchess' gratitude consist? Will she press her cheek to yours and caress you because she can torment her husband longer?

GUIDO. Alas, I shall never see her face again! Scarcely twelve hours ago I bade her farewell so abruptly, with such furious passion, that she has now shut her heart against me. No, I shall never see her more!

MORANZONE. What do you mean to do?

GUIDO. When I have laid the dagger in its place, I shall leave Padua to-night.

MORANZONE. And then?

GUIDO. I will report to the Doge in Venice that he may quickly send me to the war against the Pagans in the Holy Land; there, since life is now a burden to me, I will throw myself madly against a spear. (*Renewed groans from the Duke's sleeping room.*) Don't you hear some one cry out?

MORANZONE. I always hear a voice from the dim precincts of the grave crying for vengeance. We waste time; dawn is approaching. Have you resolved not to kill the Duke?

GUIDO. I have.

MORANZONE. Guido Ferranti, in yonder room lies the man who once sold your father and delivered him to the hands of the executioner.

There he sleeps; you have your father's dagger. Will you not kill him?

GUIDO. I will not.

MORANZONE. Unhappy father, you will remain unavenged.

GUIDO. Your son would be still more unhappy as a murderer.

MORANZONE. Bah! What is life?

GUIDO. My lord, I do not know. I did not give it; I dare not take it.

MORANZONE. I have not often thanked God as I do now because He gave me no son! What bastard blood flows in your veins that, when you have your enemy in your power, you let him escape? I wish you had remained where you were.

GUIDO. Perhaps that might have been better. Perhaps it would have been best of all if I had never beheld this world of woe.

MORANZONE. Farewell!

GUIDO. Farewell, Count Moranzone. Some day the meaning of my vengeance will be clear to you.

MORANZONE. Never. (*Exit through the window down the rope ladder.*)

GUIDO. You, father, know my purpose, and are contented with the nobler vengeance. In giving this man life I believe I am doing as you

would have done. I know not, father, whether human voices can burst the iron walls of death, whether the dead remain without tidings of what we do and leave undone for their sakes. And yet I feel a presence, as if a shadow stood beside me, and apparently ghostly kisses touched my lips and left them hallowed. (*Kneels.*) Oh, father, can you not break death's prison and show yourself to me in bodily form, that I may clasp your hand? No, it is nothing. (*Rises.*) It is the spirits of the night which fool us, make us believe, like a conjurer, that things have substance which do not exist. It is growing late. I must go now to my work. (*Draws a letter from his doublet and reads it.*) When he wakes and sees this letter, with the dagger beside it, will he not be seized with loathing of his life? Will he perhaps repent and meditate? Or will he jeer because a youth spared him, his foe? I care not. It is your charge, father, I fulfil, your command, and the command of my love, which taught me to know you as you are. (*Steals up the steps; just as he stretches out his hand to draw back the portiere, the Duchess, dressed entirely in white, confronts him. Guido starts back.*) Beatrice!

BEATRICE. Guido, is it you—so late?

GUIDO. You stainless angel of my life, surely

you come from God with a message that it is nobler to practice mercy than vengeance.

BEATRICE. I fervently implore you for mercy.

GUIDO. Oh, father, now I understand your charge, for hand in hand with mercy appeared in my path love, like a god.

BEATRICE. I thought you would return, although you cruelly deserted me. Why did you do it? I will not chide, for now I can clasp you, feel your heart beat with a timid pulse of love against my own. We are a pair of caged birds, which kiss each other through the bars. Time is passing; morning will be here in an hour. Get horses for the journey to Venice; they will not expect to find me there.

GUIDO. I will go with you to the world's end, dearest.

BEATRICE. And you really love me?

GUIDO. Does the lark love the gray dawn which wakes his music?

BEATRICE. Can nothing change you?

GUIDO. Nothing in this world. The needle of the sailor's compass does not point so surely as I toward the magnet of your love.

BEATRICE. Does no barrier longer rise between us?

GUIDO. Not now, or in the future.

BEATRICE. This is *my* work.

GUIDO. Mine awaits me here.

BEATRICE. Are you going to leave me—desert me again as before?

GUIDO. I will return in a moment. First, I must hasten into the Duke's rooms and leave this letter there beside this dagger, that when he wakes——

BEATRICE. Who wakes?

GUIDO. The Duke.

BEATRICE. He will never wake again.

GUIDO. Is he dead?

BEATRICE. Yes, he is dead.

GUIDO. O God, how wonderful are Thy ways! Could I ever have thought Thou wouldst this very night, when I had confided to Thy hands the vengeance that is Thine, touch this man with Thy finger and summon him before Thy judgment seat?

BEATRICE. I have just stabbed him——

GUIDO (*in horror*). Oh!

BEATRICE. In his sleep. Come nearer, dearest, that I may tell you. Before I begin, kiss me upon the lips. You will not kiss me now? Well, you will when you learn how I killed him. After you had left me in enmity, I felt that life was worthless without your love. I had resolved to kill myself to-night. About an hour ago I woke, drew from beneath our pillows my dagger,

where I had hidden it with this design, unsheathed it and tried its edge, and thought of you, whom I so dearly loved. It was already directed toward me, when I saw the old man, rich in years as he was in sin. There he lay, still muttering curses in his sleep. At the sight of the horrible face a thought suddenly darted like lightning through my brain: this is the barrier of which Guido spoke—whom else could he have meant by this barrier except him? What happened then I scarcely know. Only one thing, that between him and me a smoking, bloody mist arose.

GUIDO. Horrible!

BEATRICE. So you might have called the spectacle. Then blood rained; then he groaned, and then the moaning ceased. I heard only the blood dripping on the floor.

GUIDO. Enough! Enough!

BEATRICE. Will you not kiss me now? Do you not remember your own words: woman's love makes angels of us men? Well, men's love makes women sufferers, who for their sakes bear all things.

GUIDO. God!

BEATRICE. You do not say a word?

GUIDO. Words die upon my lips.

BEATRICE. The Duke was killed with this steel. I did not think that he would bleed so

much. Hands may be washed with water—hands, is not that so? But my soul? Enough of this! Let us go away! Has not the barrier between us fallen? What do you want more? Come, morning is approaching. (*Lays her hand on Guido's.*)

GUIDO (*shrinking from her*). Accursed saint! Angel from hell! What murderous devil instigated you? That you killed your husband is nothing. Hell was already yawning for his soul; but with him you have murdered love, and where it was is now a bloody spot, exhaling the foul vapors of disease and pestilence, and strangling love.

BEATRICE (*as if seized with astonishment*). Yet surely I did it for you. Had you desired to do this deed I would not have permitted it. You must be without stain or blot, untouched, blameless, unsullied. Man knows not what woman does for love. Have I not forever ruined my soul for you? Be kind to me; I did it for your sake.

GUIDO. Do not touch me; a thin stream of blood is flowing here between us, which no bridge can span. When you stabbed your husband, you struck love to the heart. We shall never see each other more.

BEATRICE (*wringing her hands*). For you! For you! I did it for you; do you forget that?

You spoke of a barrier between us: the barrier now lies above in yonder room, fallen, destroyed, ruined and shattered—it will no longer part us.

GUIDO. You misunderstood me. Sin was the barrier, and you have planted it: crime was the barrier: the barrier was murder, and your hand has built it so high that it shuts out Heaven and God.

BEATRICE. I did it for you; you must not abandon me. Guido, listen! Secure horses; let us fly to-night. The past is—like an evil dream—forgotten. The future beckons us; shall we not go forth to sweet days of love upon the meadows? We will laugh, no, but if we weep we shall weep together. I will serve you like a poor woman, like a maid-servant. I will be modest and full of humility; you do not know me.

GUIDO. Yes, yes; I know you now. Go, I tell you; go out of my sight!

BEATRICE (*pacing to and fro*). God, how I have loved this man!

GUIDO. Never! Else love would have stayed your arm when you sullied its sanctuary, which innocence alone is fit to enter.

BEATRICE. These are only words, words, words.

GUIDO. Go! How could we share love's banquet? You would pour poison in the conse-

crated wine, murder would dip its finger in the dish. I would rather have suffered a thousand deaths.

BEATRICE. I have suffered a thousand deaths since I did it.

GUIDO. It is life, not death, you have to fear.

BEATRICE (*throwing herself on her knees*). Then kill me! I have shed blood, shed more, and Heaven or hell will greet us united. Draw your sword and quickly settle the account with death, already licking his lips for this food. Quick, let your sword rest in my heart; it will find there only its master's image. But if you will not slay me with your sword, then bid me fall upon this smoking knife, I'll do it.

GUIDO (*wresting the knife from her*). Give it to me, give it! Oh, God, even your hand is wet with blood. Hell is here. I can stay no longer.

BEATRICE. Will you not raise me, or must I drag myself, like a beggar, on my knees?

GUIDO. Let me never see your face again!

BEATRICE. How happy it would have been for me, if I had never seen you! Remember, I did it for your sake. (*Guido shrinks back; still kneeling she clasps his hands.*) No, Guido, listen to me a little time! Before you came to Padua, I led a pitiable life, but without thought of murder, subject to my husband's cruelty, obedient to

his unjust desires, as pure as any maid of noble blood, who now would turn away from me with a shudder. Then you came, Guido, and from your lips I heard the first kind words since I left my loved France. What matters that? You came, and in your eyes I read love's meaning, every word of yours sounded like music in my dulled soul. You were as radiant as the St. Michael in Santa Croce, where I go to pray. Shall I ever again go there to pray? In your young face shone the brightness of the morning. So I loved you, and yet concealed my love. You wooed me, you knelt before me, as I am now kneeling at your feet. With sweet vows —they still echo in my ears—you swore to love me; I trusted you. I thought many women in the world, had they been wedded to this monster, chained to him as the galley slaves are fettered to lepers—many women would have approached you as temptresses. I did not do that. I know, if I had done it, I should not have lain in the dust before you; you would have loved me eternally. (*Approaches him timidly after a pause.*) Whether you understand me now—I do not know, Guido, for you I committed the crime which freezes my young blood to ice, for you alone. (*Extending her arms.*) Will you not speak to me? Love me

a little; alas! my youth has so lacked love, and longed for kindness.

GUIDO. I dare not look at you. What you desire is too shameful. Begone to your waiting women!

BEATRICE. Ha! ha! So speaks a man! If you had come to me with a guilt-laden soul, a murder, which you had committed not for love, but pay, I would have sat beside your couch and watched all night, that remorse might not drop her venom in your ears and banish sleep. Surely, the criminal in his torture deserves the most love.

GUIDO. Where guilt is, love has nothing to seek.

BEATRICE. Where guilt is, love must not be. Oh, God! How different is woman's love from man's! Many a wife lives here in Padua, toiling and moiling at heavy labor; her husband squanders the scanty weekly wages in miserable carousing at the tavern, then staggers home late Saturday night and finds his wife beside the fireless hearth, lulling her crying child to sleep. Then he begins to beat her because the child is crying with hunger and the embers are black. The woman loves him, rises the next morning, her face swollen with grief and bruises, sweeps the house, attends to her work, forces herself to smile, and is only too happy if he does not beat

her again before their child! That is woman's love. (*Pause.*) You are silent? Oh, be kind to me, while the summer of my life still shines. You cannot thrust me from your side: whither shall I go, if you drive me from you? For you this hand has murdered life, for you my soul is irrevocably wrecked.

GUIDO. Begone from my sight! The dead man is a spirit, and our love will wander like a spirit around its desolate grave, flit through this dead house, and weep that it was murdered with your husband. Do you not see it?

BEATRICE. I see that when men love, they give to women contemptibly little, but women, when they love, give all. I see this now, Guido.

GUIDO. Begone! Begone! Wake your dead before you return.

BEATRICE. I would to God that I could wake the dead; give to the glassy eye its power of sight; restore to the tongue its old eloquence, to the heart its beat—it can not be. What is done, is done; once dead is dead forever; fire no longer warms, the winter snows do not injure; something has vanished—if you call, no answer comes; if you jest, there is no laugh—and if you stab, the blood will never flow. If only I could wake him! Oh, God, turn back thy sun for a brief space; strike this night from the book of

time and erase it. Turn back the sun and let me be what I was an hour ago. No, no, Time does not stand still for anything; the sun does not stay his course, no matter how hoarsely remorse may shriek. But you, beloved, have you no longer one word of pity for me? Oh, Guido, Guido, kiss me once again! Do not drive me to desperation. A woman grows mad when she is treated thus. Will you not kiss me once again?

GUIDO (*holding the knife aloft*). No, not till the blood upon this steel has dried, not even then.

BEATRICE. How little pity, O, our Saviour, is bestowed upon us women in this cold world! Man lures us to the gulf of ruin, and then deserts us when we fall.

GUIDO (*wildly*). Go to your dead.

BEATRICE (*ascending the steps*). Well, then, I will go!

GUIDO. Let me find mercy, when at night I commit loathsome murder.

BEATRICE (*descending several steps*). Did you say murder? Murder is hungry and demands still more. Death, his brother, is not satisfied; he is striding through the house and will not go until he has a companion. Wait, Death, I will give you a faithful servant to journey with you. Cease to shriek, Murder; you shall feast till you are satisfied. A storm will threaten this

house before morning, a storm so terrible that the pale moon already is gray with fear; a light wind sweeps wailing round the palace; the high stars are hurrying madly through their heavenly course, as if the night would melt in tears of flame over what the day has brought forth. O, weep, sorrowing heaven; weep thy fill! Though anguish should drown the world like a deluge, till it became one sea of bitter tears; it would not be enough for you. (*A peal of thunder.*) Do you not hear, Heaven has discharged its howitzers. Vengeance has waked, and her hounds are set upon the world. Whichever of us two has called the thunder down upon his head, let him beware of the disaster the forked lightning hides within its flame. (*A flash of lightning, followed by a peal of thunder.*)

GUIDO. Hence! Hence! (*Exit Duchess. As she raises the purple curtain, she looks at Guido a moment, but the latter makes no sign. It thunders again.*) My life lies in ashes at my feet; love itself is slain. In its place Murder steals forward on light, blood-stained feet. And she, who did the deed—she loved me and committed the crime for my sake. How cruel I was to her! Beatrice, Beatrice, come back! (*As he ascends the stairs, the noise of soldiers is heard.*) Ha! What is that? The glare of torches and the

tramp of hurrying feet. God grant they may not seize her. (*The noise grows louder.*) Beatrice! There is still time for flight. Come, come down! (*The voice of the Duchess is heard outside.*)

BEATRICE. My husband's murderer fled yonder. (*A band of soldiers rush down the stairs. At first they do not see Guido, until the Duchess, surrounded by her servants bearing torches, appears at the top and points to Guido. He is instantly arrested. One of the soldiers snatches the knife from his hand and shows it to the captain of the guard.*)

ACT IV.

Court of justice. The walls below are covered with stamped grey velvet. Above they are red. Gilt symbolical figures support the roof, which is composed of red rays; the frieze and the panels of the roof are grey. A white satin canopy with gold flowers has been erected for the Duchess. Below is a long bench covered with red cloth for the judges. Farther on is a table for the clerk of the court. Two soldiers stand on each side of the canopy, and two soldiers guard the door. Some of the citizens have come in, others are still entering and greeting each other. Two bailiffs in violet costumes, with long white staffs, are keeping order.

First Citizen. Good morning, Neighbor Anton.

Second Citizen. Good morning, Neighbor Dominick.

First Citizen. This is a strange day for Padua, isn't it?—the Duke dead.

Second Citizen. I can tell you, Neighbor

Dominick, I haven't experienced such a day since the last Duke died—as sure as I'm an honest man.

First Citizen. First he'll be examined and then sentenced, isn't that so, Neighbor Anton?

Second Citizen. Oh, no, or he might escape punishment. First he'll be sentenced, that he may get his dues, and then the examination will take place, so that no injustice will be possible.

First Citizen. Come, come; he'll lose his life, that's certain.

Second Citizen. It's surely a very bad thing to shed the blood of a Duke.

First Citizen. A Duke must have blue blood.

Second Citizen. According to my view, our Duke had black blood, like his soul.

First Citizen. Beware, Neighbor Anton, the bailiff with the blue eyes is aiming at you.

Second Citizen. What do I care whether he stares at me with his blue eyes; he can't beat me with them.

Third Citizen. What do you think of the young man who stuck his knife into the Duke?

Second Citizen. He's a well-educated, pleasant, good-looking fellow, and yet a scoundrel, because he killed the Duke.

Third Citizen. He did it for the first time. Perhaps the law will grant him mitigating cir-

cumstances, because it is not a repetition of the offence.

SECOND CITIZEN. Yes, indeed, I didn't think of that. But the law is strict to everybody.

BAILIFF. Hold your tongue, you rascal.

SECOND CITIZEN. Am I your mirror, Sirrah Bailiff, that you call me rascal?

FIRST CITIZEN. Here comes one of the court people. Well, Dame Lucia, what is the news at court? How is your poor mistress, the sweet-faced Duchess?

LUCIA. A fine good morrow! A fine day of misfortune! What a day! What a misfortune! Last June at Michaelmas it was just nineteen years since I married my husband. Now it is August, and the Duke is murdered; there's a strange coincidence.

SECOND CITIZEN. If it's a strange coincidence, perhaps the young man won't be executed. There's no law against coincidences, because there's none against incidents.

FIRST CITIZEN. But what is the Duchess doing?

LUCIA. I knew that some misfortune was hanging over the house; six weeks ago the cakes were all scorched on one side, and St. Martin's eve a big moth flew into the light; it had such wings that I was almost afraid——

SECOND CITIZEN. But tell us about the Duchess, good friend; how is she?

LUCIA. In truth, it's time to inquire for her, the poor lady is nearly out of her senses. She didn't close her eyes all night long, but paced up and down her room. I begged her to take something, whey or aqua-vitae, to go to bed and give her exhausted body a little sleep. No, she answered, I am afraid of dreaming. What do you think of that?—strange, isn't it?

SECOND CITIZEN. Great people are often somewhat lacking in sense; Providence makes it up to them by fine clothes.

LUCIA. Well, I know this much: God guard us from murder as long as we live. (*Moranzone enters hastily.*)

MORANZONE. Is the Duke dead?

SECOND CITIZEN. There's a knife in his heart, and they say that isn't healthy for anybody.

MORANZONE. Who is accused of the murder?

SECOND CITIZEN. The prisoner, sir.

MONANZONE. Who is the prisoner?

SECOND CITIZEN. Why, the man who is accused of having murdered the Duke.

MORANZONE. I mean, what is his name.

SECOND CITIZEN. Just what his godfathers christened him. What else should it be?

BAILIFF. His name is Guido Ferranti, my lord.

MORANZONE. I almost knew it before you told me. (*Aside.*) It is strange that he killed the Duke, when he left me in such a different mood. I think when he saw the man, the fiendish betrayer of his father, passion cast out from his heart all his boyish love doctrines and planted vengeance there. I wonder that he did not escape. (*Mingling with the crowd again.*) Tell me, how was he captured?

THIRD CITIZEN. Doubtless by the hair of the head, sir.

MORANZONE. I mean, who seized him?

THIRD CITIZEN. Why, the people who arrested him.

MORANZONE. Who raised the alarm?

THIRD CITIZEN. That I can't tell you, sir.

LUCIA. The Duchess herself pointed him out.

MORANZONE (*aside*). The Duchess! Then everything does not agree.

LUCIA. Yes, indeed! The dagger was still in his hand—the dagger of the Duchess.

MORANZONE. What did you say?

LUCIA. The Duke was killed with the Duchess's dagger.

MORANZONE (*aside*). There is some mystery here; I cannot understand it.

SECOND CITIZEN. They are a long time in coming.

FIRST CITIZEN. 'Pon my honor, they'll still come too early for the prisoner.

BAILIFF. Silence in the court!

FIRST CITIZEN. You're breaking the silence, Mr. Bailiff, by ordering us to keep still. (*The presiding officer of the court and the judges enter.*)

SECOND CITIZEN. Who's that in scarlet? Is it the executioner?

THIRD CITIZEN. No, that's the chief judge. (*Guido is led in under guard.*)

SECOND CITIZEN. There comes the prisoner.

THIRD CITIZEN. He looks respectable.

FIRST CITIZEN. That's just his rascality; nowadays scoundrels look so respectable that decent people, if they want to be distinguished from them, must look like rascals. (*The executioner enters and stands behind Guido.*)

SECOND CITIZEN. There comes the executioner! Lord! Do you think the axe is sharp?

FIRST CITIZEN. Yes, sharper than your wit; but the edge isn't turned toward him, do you notice that?

SECOND CITIZEN (*scratching his neck*). Upon my word, I don't like it so near.

FIRST CITIZEN. Why, you needn't be afraid.

They don't cut off the heads of common people, they simply hang us. (*Trumpets blare outside.*)

THIRD CITIZEN. What does that blast of trumpets mean? Are the proceedings over already?

FIRST CITIZEN. No, it is for the Duchess. (*The Duchess enters in a black velvet robe; her train of figured black velvet is borne by two pages clad in violet. With her come the Cardinal in scarlet and the gentlemen of the court in black. She takes her seat on the throne above the judges; the latter rise and lift their caps at her entrance. The Cardinal sits a little lower by her side. The courtiers gather around the throne.*)

SECOND CITIZEN. How pale the poor Duchess looks! Will she be on the throne?

FIRST CITIZEN. Yes, she will take the Duke's place now.

SECOND CITIZEN. That will be a good thing for Padua; the Duchess is a kind, charitable lady —she once cured my child of fever.

THIRD CITIZEN. Yes, and more; she gave us bread. That must not be forgotten.

A SOLDIER. Move back, good people!

SECOND CITIZEN. Why need we move back, if we are good?

BAILIFF. Silentium!

CHIEF JUDGE. With Your Grace's consent, if it be your pleasure, we will commence proceed-

ings concerning the murder of the Duke. (*The Duchess bows.*) Let the prisoner step forward! What is your name?

GUIDO. What does that matter, my lord?

CHIEF JUDGE. You are called Guido Ferranti in Padua.

GUIDO. A man will die under that name just as well as under any other.

CHIEF JUDGE. You are well aware of what a terrible crime you are here accused: the treacherous murder of our Duke, Simone Gesso, Lord of Padua. What have you to say in answer?

GUIDO. Nothing.

CHIEF JUDGE. Do you thereby make a confession of guilt?

GUIDO. No, I confess nothing and deny nothing. I pray you, my lord, proceed as quickly as justice and the law will permit, I shall make no statement.

CHIEF JUDGE. Then you cannot be guiltless of this murder, rather your stony, perverse heart has closed its doors to right. Do not believe that your silence will profit you; on the contrary, it increases your guilt, of which, in truth, we are fully convinced. Once more: speak!

GUIDO. I will say nothing.

CHIEF JUDGE. Then there is nothing left for

me to do, except to pronounce upon you the sentence of speedy death.

GUIDO. I beg of you to declare your judgment quickly; you can grant me nothing I desire more.

CHIEF JUDGE (*rising*). Guido Ferranti.

MORANZONE (*stepping out of the crowd*). Stay, my lord!

CHIEF JUDGE. Who are you that command justice to halt?

MORANZONE. If it is justice, let it take its course; but if it is not justice——

CHIEF JUDGE. Who is this man?

BARDI. A nobleman, and an acquaintance of our former Duke.

CHIEF JUDGE. Then you have come just at the right time to see our Duke's murder expiated.

MORANZONE. Has suspicion merely rested blindly on him, or have you proofs that it was he?

CHIEF JUDGE. Three times the court commanded him to speak, but guilt lies heavily upon his tongue, for he brings forward nothing in his defence, nor tries to clear himself from the charge, as innocence would do.

MORANZONE. Again I ask: have you proofs?

CHIEF JUDGE (*showing the dagger*). This dagger, which, covered with blood, a soldier

wrenched from his blood-stained hands last night; do we need farther proof?

MORANZONE (*takes the dagger and approaches the Duchess*). Did I not see a dagger like this hanging from Your Grace's girdle? (*The Duchess shudders without making any reply.*) Permit me a few moments with this young man, who is in so dangerous a position.

CHIEF JUDGE. With pleasure, sir! May you induce him to free his heart of its guilt. (*Moranzone crosses at right to Guido and takes his hand.*)

MORANZONE (*in a whisper*). She did it. I saw it in her eyes! Do you believe I will suffer your father's son to be dragged to the place of execution by this woman? As her husband sold your father, she now desires to deal with you.

GUIDO. Count Moranzone, I did it alone. You may be satisfied, my father is avenged.

MORANZONE. Enough, enough, I know you did not do it, or your father's dagger, not this woman's toy, would have performed the work. See how she is staring at us! By Heaven, the marble mask shall be pulled down, before all the world I will accuse her of this murder.

GUIDO. You shall not.

MORANZONE. Be assured I will.

GUIDO. You must not speak, my lord.

MORANZONE. Why not? If she is innocent, she can prove it, if she is guilty, let her die.

GUIDO. What shall I do?

MORANZONE. You or I—one will tell the truth here.

GUIDO. No, I will tell all.

MORANZONE. That is right, Guido. Let her crime fall on her own head, not on yours! Did she not surrender you to the guard?

GUIDO. Yes, it was she!

MORANZONE. Then avenge your father's death on her! She was the Judas' wife.

GUIDO. Yes, she was!

MORANZONE. I think no farther goad is needed, though yesterday you were in such boyish despair.

GUIDO. If yesterday I was a despairing boy, I shall certainly not be one to-day.

CHIEF JUDGE. Will he confess?

GUIDO. My lord, I will confess that a horrible murder was committed here.

FIRST CITIZEN. Now see: he has a gentle heart and has nothing to do with the murder; they will let him go free.

CHIEF JUDGE. And is this all?

GUIDO. No, I will say still more; whoever sheds human blood commits a mortal sin.

SECOND CITIZEN. He ought to tell the executioner that; it's a good maxim.

GUIDO. Lastly I entreat the court to permit me frankly to explain the mystery of this murder, dispel the darkness, and name the criminal who, with this dagger, killed the Duke last night.

CHIEF JUDGE. It is granted you.

BEATRICE (*rising*). No, no, he shall not speak; do we need any farther proofs? Was he not seized at night in the palace in the blood-stained robe of guilt?

CHIEF JUDGE (*showing her the book of laws*). Your Grace may see the law.

BEATRICE (*pushing the book aside*). Consider, Judge, is it not very probable that a man like him may, in the presence of all the people here, slander and abuse my husband, the city, the honor of this city, perhaps even myself?

CHIEF JUDGE. But the law, Your Grace!

BEATRICE. He shall not speak, he must ascend the ladder to the executioner's block with a gag in his mouth.

CHIEF JUDGE. But the law!

BEATRICE. The law does not bind us, we bind others with it.

MORANZONE. My lord, you will not permit such injustice here.

CHIEF JUDGE. Spare yourself the plea, Count

Moranzone. It would be a bad example, noble lady, to divert the law from the straight path; with this authority anarchy might move our golden scales, injustice might obtain an unjust victory.

Bardi. Your Grace cannot restrain the course of justice.

Beatrice. You preach justice and make a parade of law. It seems to me, proud Gentlemen of Padua, that to any one who injured you in land or purse, who tried to lessen your vast revenues by so much as the value of a ferry's toll, you would not grant the delay of lingering law, with the sweet patience you commend to me.

Bardi. Your Grace is doing the nobles an injustice.

Beatrice. It does not seem so to me. Which of you all, if he should find in his house at night a thief, stuffing mere worthless rubbish into his rags, would enter into negotiations with him, and not call a constable to drag him straight to prison? So you men, if you had found that fellow with my husband's blood upon his hands, would also have dragged him before his judge, that his head might be struck off.

Guido. God!

Beatrice. Speak, Judge!

Chief Judge. It cannot be, Your Grace.

Padua's laws are strict on this point; even the common murderer is permitted to defend himself with his own lips.

MORANZONE. O, just Judge! O, just law!

BEATRICE. You exult too early with your justice! This is no common murderer, Judge, rather an outlaw, a traitor to the state, captured in open war. For he who murders the ruler of a State, murders the State also, makes all women widows and all children orphans, therefore he is as much an enemy of the State, as if he should come with threatening artillery, in league with the armies of Venice, and shake the gates of our fortifications. No, he is even more dangerous to the State than bristling spears and thundering cannon, for walls, gates, battlements, forts, things composed of wood and stone, can be rebuilt, but who can call back to life the body of the dead husband, bid him live and laugh?

MAFFIO. By Saint Paul, I should think he would now be forbidden to speak.

JEPPO. Yes, that's to the purpose. Listen farther.

BEATRICE. Therefore now scatter ashes upon Padua's head, hang mourning banners out in every street, let each man clothe himself in solemn black—but ere we prepare for the funeral rites, let us remember the infamous murderer

who has brought ruin upon our State. Take him at once to that narrow house, whence no sound comes, where, with a little dust, Death fills the lying mouths of men.

GUIDO. Let me go, Bailiffs! Hear me, Judge! You can as easily curb the fetterless ocean, the winter whirlwind, the Alpine tempest, as to quiet me. And if you thrust your swords into my throat, each gaping wound will cry out to Heaven with a wrathful tongue.

CHIEF JUDGE. Such violence is worthless; so far as the tribunal does not give you legal authority for free speech, your words are spoken to the wind. (*The Duchess smiles. Guido falls backward with a despairing gesture.*) Your Grace, I will now go with these wise judges into another room to consult about this difficult point of law, and examine statutes and precedents.

BEATRICE. Go, honored Judge, scan the statutes carefully, and do not yield to this scoundrel's will.

MORANZONE. Go, honored Judge; scan your conscience, and send no one to death unheard. (*Exit judges.*)

BEATRICE. Silence, you evil spirit of my life, for the second time you stand between us; this time, I think, my lord, it is my turn.

GUIDO. I will not die, until I have given my deposition.

BEATRICE. Die, and take your secret with you to the grave.

GUIDO. Are you still that Duchess of Padua?

BEATRICE. I am what you have made me; look here, look; I am your creature.

MAFFIO. See, isn't she like the white tigress in Venice which an Indian sultan once sent to the Doge?

JEPPO. Hush, she'll hear you.

EXECUTIONER. My lad, I don't know what your words can accomplish, since my axe is so near your neck; talk will not dull its edge. But if you set so much value on it, turn to the man of the church yonder; the common people call him here, in truth; I know he has a kindly heart.

GUIDO. You, whose calling is Death, are more courteous than any of the rest.

EXECUTIONER. May God have mercy on you, I am doing you the last service on earth.

GUIDO. My Lord Cardinal, in a Christian country, where the Redeemer's benign face looks down from the high seat of the court of justice, must a man die without confession? Else let me proclaim the horrible story of my sin, in so far as sin weighs upon my soul.

BEATRICE. Useless waste of time!

CARDINAL. Alas, my son, I have no influence upon the judges. My office begins when sentence has been pronounced, in warning the trembling sinner to repent, that he may whisper into the ear of Holy Church the secrets of his guilt-laden heart.

BEATRICE. You can tell all you know in the confessional until your lips grow weary, but here you shall not speak.

GUIDO. Reverend Father, you offer me but feeble consolation.

CARDINAL. No, my son, the mighty power of the Church does not end with this poor soap-bubble world, of which we, Hieronymus says, are but the dust—for if the sinner dies repentant, prayer and our holy masses may do much to snatch the soul from the fires of purgatory.

BEATRICE. If you meet in the fires of purgatory my husband, with a blood-red star on his heart, tell him I sent you there.

GUIDO. Oh, God!

MORANZONE. This is the woman you loved, is it not?

CARDINAL. How cruel Your Grace is to this man!

BEATRICE. Not half so cruel as he.

CARDINAL. Yes, he killed your husband.

BEATRICE. Certainly.

CARDINAL. Yet mercy is the fairest prerogative of princes.

BEATRICE. No mercy was granted me, and I will give none. He has transformed my heart into a stone, sowed nettles in a field of blossoming flowers, poisoned the fount of pity in my breast, and torn up kindness by the roots. My life is like a barren land from which goodness is wholly stripped. I am what he has made me. (*The Duchess weeps.*)

JEPPO. Strange that she loved the wicked Duke.

MAFFIO. It's strange when women love their husbands, and it is strange when they do not.

JEPPO. What a philosopher you are, Petrucci.

MAFFIO. I can bear the woes of others—that is philosophy.

BEATRICE. Those graybeards in council are staying a long time. Bid them come, bid them come quickly, or my heart will burst, it throbs so violently; not as if I were anxious to live, for God knows my life is not so full of joy; but in spite of all I would not like to die without companions or go forth to hell alone. Cardinal, can you not read here on my brow a word written in scarlet letters? It is vengeance. Bring water that I may wash it off; it was seared on me last night. Must I wear it by daylight, Cardinal?

Oh, how it scorches and burns my brain! Give me a knife—no, not that one; another. I'll cut it out.

CARDINAL. It is according to the law of nature to rave against the murderous hand of the criminal who killed your husband in his sleep.

BEATRICE. Oh, Cardinal, if I could burn this hand! It will burn forever in the other world.

CARDINAL. Our church commands us to forgive our enemies.

BEATRICE. Forgive! What is that? I was never forgiven. They are coming at last. Well, my lord judge, well? (*The chief judge enters.*)

CHIEF JUDGE. August lady and liege mistress, we have long examined the disputed point and carefully considered Your Grace's wisdom—wisdom never spoke from lovelier lips.

BEATRICE. Go on, sir, without compliments.

CHIEF JUDGE. We find, as Your Grace correctly demonstrated, that every one who, by force or strategy, conspires against the person of the ruler is *ipse facto* an outlaw and devoid of the rights which belong to others, is a traitor and an enemy of the people, whom any sword can slay without its owner's being arrested for it; but if he is brought before the tribunal he must silently and humbly submit to his well-earned fate, since he has forfeited the right of free speech.

BEATRICE. I thank you from my heart. I like your law. And now, I beg you, dispatch the murderer, for I am weary, and so is the executioner. What more is there?

CHIEF JUDGE. Yes, Your Grace, there is more. The man is a stranger, not a Paduan, and therefore owed our Duke no more fealty than nature requires from every man. Even though accused of manifold acts of treason, whose punishment is certain death, he still has the right of free speech in public session before the people; nay, the court will earnestly entreat him to defend his life according to due form, that his own city, justly angered, may not charge our city with injustice, from which a war might arise for us. Thus merciful are the laws of Padua to the alien within her walls!

BEATRICE. Is he, as a member of our court, a stranger here?

CHIEF JUDGE. Not until he has served seven years can he become a citizen of Padua.

GUIDO. I thank you from my heart. I like your law.

SECOND CITIZEN. I don't like laws. If there were no laws there would be no transgressors, and everybody would be virtuous.

FIRST CITIZEN. Why, of course, that's a clever saying; it will help a man on.

BAILIFF. Yes, to the gallows, rascal!

BEATRICE. Is this the law?

CHIEF JUDGE. Certainly this is the law here, Your Grace.

BEATRICE. Show me the book; it will stand there blood-red.

JEPPO. Look at our Duchess!

BEATRICE. Accursed law, Ah, if I could but tear you from the government, as I now tear you from this book! (*Tears out the page.*) Count Bardi, one word! Are you trustworthy? Get me a horse; let it wait at my gate, for I must ride to Venice as soon as possible.

BARDI. To Venice, Your Grace?

BEATRICE. Not a word of it! Go, go at once! (*Exit Bardi.*) One word more, Judge. If, as you say, this is the law in Padua—and I have no doubt you are correct, though justice in such a case is an injustice—can I not, by virtue of my office, adjourn this court until a later day?

CHIEF JUDGE. A criminal suit can never be adjourned.

BEATRICE. I will not stay to hear this man when with brutal tongue he slanders me. Besides, duties which cannot be deferred await me at home. Come, Gentlemen!

CHIEF JUDGE. Your Grace, you must not go until the accused is condemned or acquitted.

BEATRICE. Must not, Judge? Why, by what right do you place obstacles in my path? Am I not mistress here in Padua—the ruler of the state?

CHIEF JUDGE. For this very reason. Since you are the fount of life as well as death, from which justice flows in a mighty stream, justice will dry up if you are not present; the goal will be missing; therefore you must stay.

BEATRICE. Will you detain me against my will?

CHIEF JUDGE. Your will cannot oppose the law.

BEATRICE. And if I force my way out?

CHIEF JUDGE. You will not force the judges to make way for you.

BEATRICE. I will not stay. (*Rises from her seat.*)

CHIEF JUDGE. Is the doorkeeper there? Let him come forward. (*The doorkeeper advances.*) You know the duties of your office! (*The doorkeeper locks the doors of the courtroom, which are at the left, and kneels as the Duchess and her train approach.*)

DOORKEEPER. In all humility, I beseech Your Grace, do not let my duty become discourtesy, the unwelcome dignity a burden. By virtue of the same law which makes you a Princess I stay

here. If I should break the law, Your Grace, I should break your regulation, and not mine.

BEATRICE. Is there no one among you, Gentlemen, who will thrust this braggart out of the way?

MAFFIO (*draws his sword*). I will!

CHIEF JUDGE. Count Maffio, be on your guard. (*To Jeppo.*) You, too, my lord. The first who draws his sword, even though it may be only against a bailiff, dies before night.

BEATRICE. Sheathe your swords, Gentlemen; it beseems me to listen to this man. (*Goes to the throne.*)

MAFFIO. Now you will have your enemy in your hand.

CHIEF JUDGE (*grasping the hourglass*). Guido Ferranti, while the sand in this hourglass is running out you are free to speak; no longer.

GUIDO. It will suffice.

CHIEF JUDGE. You stand upon the verge of the grave; by your salvation speak only the absolute truth; nothing else will profit you.

GUIDO. If I speak falsely, deliver my body to the executioner.

CHIEF JUDGE (*reversing the hourglass*). Silence while the prisoner speaks.

BAILIFF. Silentium in the hall!

GUIDO. My Lord Judge, honorable justices of

this high court, I scarcely know how to begin my speech, so strangely horrible the story seems to me. First, let me tell my descent. I am the son of brave Lorenzo, the Duke who by shameful treachery was sold by a scoundrel, the former Duke in this city, in Padua.

CHIEF JUDGE. Take care! It will avail you nothing to insult the Prince who now rests in the coffin.

MAFFIO. By Saint Jacob, then he is Parma's hereditary lord.

JEPPO. I always thought him a nobleman.

GUIDO. I confess that with the purpose of just vengeance, the most absolutely just vengeance on a murderer, I took service at the court of the Duke, sat at his table, drank his wine, and was his comrade. So much I confess, and also that I lay in wait till he confided to me the dearest secret of his life, till he clung to me and trusted me in all respects, as my noble father once trusted him. I waited for that. (*To the executioner.*) You man of blood, do not aim your axe at me before the time. Who knows whether my death hour is at hand? Is there no other neck here except mine?

CHIEF JUDGE. The sand in the hourglass is running swiftly. Come quickly to the murder of the Duke.

GUIDO. In short, it was twelve o'clock last night when, by a strong rope, I climbed the palace wall to avenge my father's murder. With this intention, I admit it, sir. So much I will confess, and also this: When I had gently ascended the stairs which lead to the bedroom of the Duke, and grasped with my hand the scarlet portiere, which trembled, shaken by the storm, the white moon in the heavens filled the dark space with a flood of silver; the night lighted her candles for me. The man I hated was still uttering curses in his sleep, and at the thought of my father's murder—my father, whom he bartered to the block, sold to the scaffold—I pierced the traitor's heart with this very dagger, which I found by chance in the room.

BEATRICE (*rising*). Oh!

GUIDO (*pouring out the words*). I stabbed the Duke. May I now, Judge, implore one favor? Let me no longer behold the sun when it illumines the misery of this wretched world.

CHIEF JUDGE. Your wish shall be granted. Die to-night! Lead him away! Come, Mistress, Sovereign Lady! (*Guido is led out; as he goes the Duchess extends her arms towards him and rushes across the stage.*)

BEATRICE. Guido! Guido! (*She falls fainting.*)

ACT V.

A dungeon in the State prison at Padua. Guido is lying (at the left) upon a bench; beside it is a table with a cup. Five soldiers are drinking and playing dice on a stone table in the corner; one of them has a lantern hanging from his halberd. A torch is fastened into the wall above Guido's head. In the back are two grated windows, between them (in the center) the door. They open into a corridor. The stage is moderately dark.

First Soldier (*casting dice*). Six again, my dear Pietro!

Second Soldier. The devil, Lieutenant! I'll play with you no longer, or I shall lose everything.

Third Soldier. Except your sense; you need have no fear about that.

Second Soldier. No, he can't take that.

Third Soldier. No; you haven't any to lose.

The Soldiers (*loudly*). Ha! Ha! Ha!

First Soldier. Hush, you'll wake the prisoner; he's asleep.

SECOND SOLDIER. What does that matter? He'll sleep long enough after he's buried. Upon my word, he would be glad if we could wake him when he's lying in the grave.

THIRD SOLDIER. Oh, no; for when he wakes up there it will be the Day of Judgment.

SECOND SOLDIER. And besides, he went to work badly; for you must know that to kill one of us, who are only flesh and blood, is going against orders; but to kill a Duke is going against the law.

FIRST SOLDIER. But he was a very infamous nobleman.

SECOND SOLDIER. Then he ought not to have touched him, for whoever meddles with infamous people runs the risk of being befouled by their villainy.

THIRD SOLDIER. Of course. How old is the prisoner?

SECOND SOLDIER. Old enough to commit follies, and not yet old enough to be sensible.

FIRST SOLDIER. Then he may be any age.

SECOND SOLDIER. They say the Duchess wanted to pardon him.

FIRST SOLDIER. Really?

SECOND SOLDIER. Yes; she is said to have urged it on the Chief Judge, but he wouldn't.

First Soldier. I should have thought, Pietro, the Duchess could do everything.

Second Soldier. Well, yes, as she is built. I know no prettier woman.

Soldiers. Ha! Ha! Ha!

First Soldier. I thought our Duchess could command everything.

Second Soldier. Oh, no; for he is now delivered to his judges, and they will see that he is executed—they and big Hugo, the executioner. But when his head is once off, then the Duchess can pardon him, if it so pleases her. There's no law against that.

First Soldier. I don't believe that big Hugo, as you call him, will finally practice his profession on him. This Guido is of noble blood, so, according to the law, he can take poison if it is his pleasure.

Third Soldier. Upon honor, to drink poison is a sorry pleasure.

Second Soldier. What sort of poison is it?

First Soldier. Why, poison that kills.

Second Soldier. What sort of thing is poison?

First Soldier. A drink like water, only not quite so beneficial. If you want to try it, here's some in the cup.

SECOND SOLDIER. Zounds, if it isn't good for me I won't touch it.

THIRD SOLDIER. Suppose he doesn't drink it?

FIRST SOLDIER. Then he will be executed.

THIRD SOLDIER. And if he does drink it?

FIRST SOLDIER. Then he will die.

SECOND SOLDIER. That's a hard choice. I hope he'll make it wisely. (*Some one knocks at the door.*)

FIRST SOLDIER. See who that is. (*Third soldier goes and looks through the keyhole.*)

THIRD SOLDIER. A woman.

FIRST SOLDIER. Is she pretty?

THIRD SOLDIER. I can't see, Lieutenant; she wears a mask.

FIRST SOLDIER. Only very beautiful or very ugly women hide their faces. Let her in! (*The soldier opens the door; the Duchess enters in a mask and mantle.*)

BEATRICE (*to the third soldier*). Are you the officer of the guard?

FIRST SOLDIER (*stepping forward*). I am, Madame.

BEATRICE. I wish to talk with the prisoner alone.

FIRST SOLDIER. Unfortunately, that is impossible. (*The Duchess hands him a ring; he looks*

at it, returns it with a bow, and orders the soldiers.) Withdraw! *(Exit other soldiers.)*

BEATRICE. Your soldiers are somewhat rough, officer.

FIRST SOLDIER. They don't mean any harm.

BEATRICE. I shall return in a few minutes. When I pass along the corridor do not let them raise my mask.

FIRST SOLDIER. You need fear nothing, your ladyship.

BEATRICE. I have special reasons for wishing that my face should not be seen.

FIRST SOLDIER. With this ring, your ladyship, you can go in and out at your pleasure. It is the Duchess' ring.

BEATRICE. Leave us alone. *(The soldier is in the act of going.)* One moment more. What hour is appointed for the execution?

FIRST SOLDIER. According to our orders, your ladyship, we are to lead him out at twelve o'clock, but he will probably hardly wait for us. He will doubtless take a sip from yonder poison. Men dread the executioner.

BEATRICE. Is that poison?

FIRST SOLDIER. Yes, your ladyship; very strong poison.

BEATRICE. You can go now.

FIRST SOLDIER. Deuce take it, what a pretty

hand! Who can she be? Perhaps a lady who loved him. (*Exit.*)

BEATRICE (*removing the mask*). At last! Now he can fly in the cloak and mask. We are almost the same height; no one will know him. I care little for my own fate. If he does not curse me, if he trusts me, nothing matters. Will he curse me? He has a right to do so. It is now eleven o'clock. They will not come before twelve. What will they say if the nest is empty? (*Approaches the table.*) So this is poison. How strange that here in this liquid lies all life's wisdom! (*Raises the cup.*) It smells of poppy. How well I remember when I was a child in Sicily I gathered the red poppies among the grain and twined a wreath. Even my uncle, the gloomy John of Naples, laughed. I did not know that poppies can choke the fount of life, check its pulses and freeze the blood, till men can seize the poor body with hooks and cast it into the pit. Yes, the body—the soul goes to heaven or hell. Where will mine go? (*Takes the torch from the wall and approaches the couch.*) How gently he sleeps, like a boy wearied by play. Ah, if I could only sleep as peacefully; but I dream. (*Bending over him.*) Poor boy, shall I kiss him? No, my lips would scorch him; he is weary of love. Yet his white neck shall escape the executioner; I'll

see to that. This very night he will fly from Padua. I rejoice over it. You are very cunning, my lord Judge, but you are not half so cunning as I. I rejoice over that. O God, how I loved him, and what a bloodstained blossom has bloomed from it. (*Goes to the table again.*) What if I drink this potion and thus end my life! Would it not be better not to wait till Death comes to my bedside with his followers—repentance, sickness, age and sorrow. I do not know whether there is much suffering. While still so young, I go to death; yet is must be. Why? Why die? He will escape to-night, so that his blood will not be on my head. No, I must die; I am guilt-laden, therefore I must die! I should die happier if he would kiss me; but he will not. I did not know him. I thought that he would sell me to the Judge. We women never know our dearest ones until they leave us. (*The bell begins to ring.*) Hideous bell, why are you shrieking like a bloodhound's brazen mouth, for this life? Silence! You will cry in vain. He is stirring. Quick! (*Seizes the cup.*) Oh, love, love, love, I never thought that I should pledge you thus. (*Drinks the poison and sets the cup on the table behind her. The noise wakes Guido; he starts up, but does not see what she has done. Silence reigns a moment; they look at each other.*) I do

not come now to beg for mercy. I know that I stand beyond the pale of any compassion, a guilt-laden, infamous woman. Enough of that. I have already confessed to the Judges the overwhelming measure of my sin. They would not listen to me. Some said I had invented it to save you, since you were in league with me; others said women played with pity as they did with men; and others still that grief for my husband had robbed me of my reason. They did not listen to me, and when I swore it on the Bible a doctor was summoned. Ten to one—there are ten. Your life is in their power. I am called Duchess of Padua, though whether I am still I do not know. I have pardoned you, and they rejected it. It would be treason. I should have taught them that—perhaps it is so. In an hour they will be here and drag you from your cell and bind your hands behind your back, and hale you to the block. I will outstrip them. Here is the signet ring of Padua; it will surely pass you through the guard. Take this mask and cloak. They have orders to make no search. When you are once through the gate, turn to the left, and at the second bridge horses are waiting for you. To-morrow you will be in Venice. (*Pause.*) You will not speak, will not even curse me, before you go? You have a right to do so. Do you not understand that between

you and the executioner's scaffold there is scarcely so much sand to run through the hourglass as a little child can gather? Here is the ring; the hand is clean; no blood is sticking to it. Have no fear! Will you not take the ring?

GUIDO (*takes the ring and kisses it*). Gladly, noble lady.

BEATRICE. And leave Padua?

GUIDO. What! Leave Padua?

BEATRICE. This very night.

GUIDO. This very night?

BEATRICE. Thank your God for it.

GUIDO. Then I may live? Life never seemed so alluring as now.

BEATRICE. Why do you linger, Guido? Here is the cloak, at the bridge a horse—at the ferry-house below, by the second bridge. Why do you still linger here? Do you not hear the terrible bell, which with every stroke shortens your young life by moments? Fly quickly!

GUIDO. He will come soon enough.

BEATRICE. Who?

GUIDO (*quietly*). Why, the executioner!

BEATRICE. No, no.

GUIDO. He alone can take me out of Padua.

BEATRICE. What! You will dare, dare to burden my overladen soul with two dead men? One is enough. For when I stand before the throne of

God you must not come from behind with a scarlet thread round your white neck and accuse me, till the very devils who howl in hell would have compassion. Will you be more cruel than the devils whom God exiled?

GUIDO. I shall wait, noble lady.

BEATRICE. No, no, you cannot. Do you not see that I have less power in Padua than a wanton? They will kill you. I have already seen the scaffold in the open square; already the populace were pressing around it, with cruel jests, with delight in horror, as if it were the platform for a masquerade, and not death's throne of mourning. Oh, Guido, you must fly!

GUIDO. Yes, by death's hand, not yours.

BEATRICE. Oh, you are pitiless, pitiless now as always. No, Guido, you must go.

GUIDO. I shall remain, Your Grace.

BEATRICE. You must not, Guido; for it would be so terrible that the stars themselves, gazing in wonder, would fall from the sky; that the moon, paralyzed, would be eclipsed in her course, and the sun refuse to shine upon the world which witnessed your death.

GUIDO. I shall not yield.

BEATRICE (*wringing her hands*). You do not know. When the judges are once more here I shall be powerless to save you from the axe. As

if I had not already committed crimes enough! Does not one sin suffice? Must it produce a second, worse than the original crime? God, close up the womb of sin, wither it; more blood must not cleave to my hand than now.

GUIDO (*seizing her hand*). What! Have I fallen so low that I am not allowed to die for you?

BEATRICE (*withdrawing her hand*). For me? My life is a worthless thing—flung into the street mire of the world. You must not die for me—must not, Guido. I am a guilty woman.

GUIDO. Let those who know not the name of temptation, let those who have never walked like us through the glowing flame of passion, and whose lives are dull and colorless—in short, let all, if any such there are, who have not loved, cast stones at us.

BEATRICE. Woe, woe is me!

GUIDO (*throwing himself at her feet*). You are my love; you are my supreme bliss! O golden hair; O crimson lips; O cheeks created to allure man's love! Embodied image of perfection! Paying you homage, I forget the past; paying you homage, my soul touches yours; paying you homage, I feel myself a god—even though my body goes to the executioner's block, my love will last forever. (*The Duchess covers*

her face with her hands; Guido draws them down.) Raise the drooping curtains of your eyes, that I may gaze into them and say I love you; never more than when death is forcing his cold lips between us. I love you, Beatrice. Your answer? Alas for me, I can bear the executioner, but not this silence. Say that you love me. This one word, and death will no longer have a sting; but if you do not utter it, fifty thousand deaths will be a mercy. You are cruel; you do not love me!

BEATRICE. I have no right. Love's hands of innocence are stained with blood basely shed. Here on this floor is blood which I have sprinkled.

GUIDO. Not you, love; a devil has only tempted you.

BEATRICE (*rising suddenly*). No, no; each individual is his own devil, and himself makes the world a hell.

GUIDO. Then let Paradise sink to Tartarus! For now for a brief space I will make this world heaven. I love you, Beatrice.

BEATRICE. Tainted by sin, I am not worthy of you.

GUIDO. By the Redeemer, the sin, if sin it were, was mine. I cherished murder in my heart, sweetened the banquet with it, spiced the wine; in spirit I killed the accursed Duke a hundred

times a day. Had this man died only half as often as I desired it, death would have stalked continually through the house. Murder would not have rested. But you, beloved, who looked with pity on the beaten hound, at sight of whom the little children rejoiced, because the sunshine went with you where you passed, you lovely angel of divinely white purity, what was it that is called your sin?

BEATRICE. What was it? Often it seems to me a dream, an evil dream, sent by an angry God; but then I see the body in the coffin, and know it is no dream—know that my hand is red with blood and my poor soul, on its voyage to a haven of love from the wild tempests of this mad world, has wrecked its boat upon cliffs of sin. What was it, do you ask? Only murder; nothing save murder, terrible murder.

GUIDO. No, no, no, no; it was only your love's blossoms of misery. It opened to life in a moment, and in that moment bore the bloody fruit, which I had plucked a thousand times in spirit. My mind was full of murder, my arm was weak, your arm wrought murder, but your mind was pure. I love you for that reason, Beatrice. Whoever denies compassion to your anguish will find no mercy in heaven. Kiss me, sweet! (*Tries to kiss her.*)

BEATRICE. No, no; your lips are pure; mine are stained. My paramour was murder, and sin slept in my bed. Guido, if you love me, fly, for every moment is gnawing your life like a worm. Beloved one, fly, and if in after years you think of me, let it be as a woman who loved you more than all else in the world. Think of me, Guido, only as a woman who desired to sacrifice her life for her love, in doing which she killed her love. What is that? The pealing of the bell has ceased, and I hear armed men approaching on the stairs.

GUIDO (*aside*). The signal for the guard to come for me.

BEATRICE. Why did it stop ringing?

GUIDO. Must you know? My life on this side of the grave ends here—in the other world we shall meet again.

BEATRICE. It is not yet too late. Fly hence: the horse is standing by the bridge. There is still time. Away, away, you must delay no longer. (*Noise of soldiers in the corridor.*)

A VOICE OUTSIDE. Make way for the Chief Judge of Padua! (*Through the grated windows the Chief Judge is seen passing along the corridor, torch-bearers before him.*)

BEATRICE. It is too late.

A VOICE FROM OUTSIDE. Make way for the executioner!

BEATRICE (*throwing herself down*). Oh!

(*The executioner, with his axe on his shoulder, appears in the corridor, monks, bearing candles, follow him.*)

GUIDO. Farewell, my love. I will drink this poison; I do not fear the executioner, but I do not wish to die alone upon the block.

BEATRICE. Oh!

GUIDO. No, here, here in your arms, in a kiss-farewell! (*Goes to the table and seizes the cup.*) What, art thou empty? (*Throws it on the floor.*) Oh, miserly jailer, you are niggardly even with poison.

BEATRICE (*faintly*). He is not to blame.

GUIDO. Oh, God, have you drunk it, Beatrice? Tell me you did not!

BEATRICE. Though I wished to deny it, a fire is consuming my heart which will soon speak.

GUIDO. Treacherous love, why did you leave no drop for me?

BEATRICE. No, no; it held death for me alone.

GUIDO. Let me sip from your lips the poison which perhaps still clings there.

BEATRICE. You shall not die; you have shed no blood; you shall not die. I have shed it, and I must. Is not the saying written, blood for blood? Who uttered it? I do not know.

GUIDO. Wait for me; our souls will go together.

BEATRICE. No, live! There are still many women in the world ready for you, for love, not for murder.

GUIDO. I love only you.

BEATRICE. That is no cause for death.

GUIDO. If we die together, why can we not rest together in one grave?

BEATRICE. The grave is but a narrow marriage bed.

GUIDO. It will be enough for us.

BEATRICE. They will cover it with a stiff pall and bitter herbs, for roses, I think, do not grow in the grave, and if there are any they have all withered since the Duke died.

GUIDO. Ah, Beatrice, your lips wear roses which defy death.

BEATRICE. Will not my mouth, when we lie in the grave, crumble to dust, the luster of your eyes shrivel to sightless hollows, and worms, the wedding guests, consume your heart?

GUIDO. What of that? Death recoils from love, and by the eternal majesty of love I will die with you.

BEATRICE. Only the tomb is black: the grave is black, so I must go first to light the candles before you come. No, no, I will not die; I will

not die. Love, you are strong, you are young and brave! Step before me when the death angel comes, and strive with him for me! (*Thrusts Guido before her.*) I will kiss you as soon as you conquer him. Have you no way to check the poison that is rending me? Are there no longer rivers in Italy? Bring me a cup of water, and put out this fire!

GUIDO. Oh, God!

BEATRICE. Why do you hide from me that in Italy there is only dryness, no water, only fire?

GUIDO. Love!

BEATRICE. Send for the doctor, but not the one who staunched my husband's blood. Bring a doctor without delay! There is an antidote for every poison. He will sell it to us for a large reward. Tell him that for one brief hour of life Padua shall be his. I will not die. I am ill unto death. Do not touch me; poison is gnawing at my heart. I did not know that dying was such pain. I thought life had taken all the heartache for its own. It seems it is not so.

GUIDO. Accursed stars, quench your light in tears and bid your mistress, the moon, turn pale to-night.

BEATRICE. What are you doing here, beloved? This chamber is poorly decorated for a bridal room. Come, let us go as fast as possible. Where

are the horses? We ought to be half way to Venice now. How cold the night is! Let us ride faster. Are not these our wedding-bells, Guido? (*The monks outside begin their chanting.*) Music! It might be gayer; but sorrow is now the fashion. Why, I do not know. Why are you weeping? Do we not love each other? Nothing more is needed. Death, what seekest thou here? Thou wert not invited to this table; begone, thou'rt intruding. I tell thee I drank thy health with wine, and not with poison. They lied who said that I had drunk thy poison; it was poured out like my husband's blood. Thou camest too late.

GUIDO. There is nothing here, my darling; these are immaterial phantoms.

BEATRICE. Death, why dost thou linger? Go to the upper room; the cold meat of my husband's funeral banquet stands there for thee; here is a bridal feast. You are in the wrong place. It is summer, too; we do not need so fierce a fire; you are scorching us. Guido, let the grave-diggers stop shoveling this grave. I will not be buried in it. I am burning, burning, melting with the internal fire. Can you do nothing? Give me water; give me water, or else more poison. The pain is over now. How strange! I feel no suffering. Death has gone; how I rejoice. I thought

he was trying to part us. Tell me, Guido, do you regret that you ever saw me?

GUIDO. What would my life have been without you? Many have died in this dull, stupid world seeking for such a moment as this, and did not find it.

BEATRICE. Then you do not regret it? How strange!

GUIDO. Have I not feasted on beauty, Beatrice? That is enough for a man's life. I could jest. I was far more sorrowful at many a festival. But who can be sorrowful at such a feast, where death and love are our cup-bearers? We are united in love and death.

BEATRICE. I was guilty above all women, and am punished for it above all women. What do you think? It is not possible. Can love efface blood from my hands, drop balm into my wounds, heal my scars, and wash my scarlet sins snow-white? I have sinned much.

GUIDO. He does not sin who acts for love's sake.

BEATRICE. I have sinned, and yet perhaps it will be forgiven me. I have loved much. (*They now give each other the first kiss in this act. Suddenly the Duchess starts up in a terrible convulsion, tears in her agony at her robes, and at last falls back lifeless in her chair, with her face*

disfigured and drawn by suffering. Guido takes the dagger from her girdle, kills himself with it, and as he falls across her knees, draws the cloak hanging over the back of the chair, and covers her entirely. A short pause. Then the tramp of soldiers is heard in the corridor, the door is opened, the Chief Judge, the executioner, and the guard enter and see the black-draped figure and Guido, who lies obliquely across it. The Chief Judge rushes forward and draws the mantle away from the Duchess, whose face is now the marble image of peace—a sign that God has pardoned her.

END.

SALOME

SALOME

A PLAY

BY

OSCAR WILDE

NEW YORK
F. M. BUCKLES & COMPANY
1906

CHARACTERS.

HEROD ANTIPAS, *Tetrarch of Judaea.*
IOKANAAN, *the Prophet.*
THE YOUNG SYRIAN, *Captain of the Guard.*
TIGELLINUS, a *Young Roman.*
A Cappadocian.
A Nubian.
First Soldier.
Second Soldier.
The Page of Herodias.
Jews, Nazarenes, etc.
A Slave.
NAAMAN, *the Executioner.*
HERODIAS, *Wife of the Tetrarch.*
SALOME, *Daughter of Herodias.*
The Slaves of Salome.

SALOME.

SCENE—*A great terrace in the Palace of Herod, set above the banqueting-hall. Some soldiers are leaning over the balcony. To the right there is a gigantic staircase, to the left, at the back, an old cistern surrounded by a wall of green bronze. The moon is shining very brightly.*

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. How beautiful is the Princess Salome to-night!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. Look at the moon. How strange the moon seems! She is like a woman rising from a tomb. She is like a dead woman. One might fancy she was looking for dead things.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. She has a strange look. She is like a little princess who wears a yellow veil, and whose feet are of silver. She is like a princess who has little white doves for feet. One might fancy she was dancing.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. She is like a woman who is dead. She moves very slowly. (*Noise in the banqueting-hall.*)

First Soldier. What an uproar! Who are those wild beasts howling?

Second Soldier. The Jews. They are always like that. They are disputing about their religion.

First Soldier. Why do they dispute about their religion?

Second Soldier. I cannot tell. They are always doing it. The Pharisees, for instance, say that there are angels, and the Sadducees declare that angels do not exist.

First Soldier. I think it is ridiculous to dispute about such things.

The Young Syrian. How beautiful is the Princess Salome to-night!

The Page of Herodias. You are always looking at her. You look at her too much. It is dangerous to look at people in such fashion. Something terrible may happen.

The Young Syrian. She is very beautiful to-night.

First Soldier. The Tetrarch has a sombre aspect.

Second Soldier. Yes; he has a sombre aspect.

First Soldier. He is looking at something.

Second Soldier. He is looking at some one.

First Soldier. At whom is he looking?

SECOND SOLDIER. I cannot tell.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. How pale the Princess is! Never have I seen her so pale. She is like the shadow of a white rose in a mirror of silver.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. You must not look at her. You look too much at her.

FIRST SOLDIER. Herodias has filled the cup of the Tetrarch.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. Is that the Queen Herodias, she who wears a black mitre sewed with pearls, and whose hair is powdered with blue dust?

FIRST SOLDIER. Yes; that is Herodias, the Tetrarch's wife.

SECOND SOLDIER. The Tetrarch is very fond of wine. He has wine of three sorts. One which is brought from the Island of Samothrace, and is purple like the cloak of Cæsar.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. I have never seen Cæsar.

SECOND SOLDIER. Another that comes from a town called Cyprus, and is as yellow as gold.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. I love gold.

SECOND SOLDIER. And the third is a wine of Sicily. That wine is as red as blood.

THE NUBIAN. The gods of my country are very fond of blood. Twice in the year we sacrifice to them young men and maidens; fifty young men and a hundred maidens. But I am afraid

that we never give them quite enough, for they are very harsh to us.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. In my country there are no gods left. The Romans have driven them out. There are some who say that they have hidden themselves in the mountains, but I do not believe it. Three nights I have been on the mountains seeking them everywhere. I did not find them, and at last I called them by their names, and they did not come. I think they are dead.

FIRST SOLDIER. The Jews worship a God that one cannot see.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. I cannot understand that.

FIRST SOLDIER. In fact, they only believe in things that one cannot see.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. That seems to me altogether ridiculous.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. After me shall come another mightier than I. I am not worthy so much as to unloose the latchet of his shoes. When he cometh the solitary places shall be glad. They shall blossom like the rose. The eyes of the blind shall see the day, and the ears of the deaf shall be opened. The sucking child shall put his hand upon the dragon's lair, he shall lead the lions by their manes.

SECOND SOLDIER. Make him be silent. He is always saying ridiculous things.

FIRST SOLDIER. No, no. He is a holy man. He is very gentle, too. Every day when I give him to eat he thanks me.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. Who is he?

FIRST SOLDIER. A prophet.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. What is his name?

FIRST SOLDIER. Iokanaan.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. Whence comes he?

FIRST SOLDIER. From the desert, where he fed on locusts and wild honey. He was clothed in camel's hair, and round his loins he had a leathern belt. He was very terrible to look upon. A great multitude used to follow him. He even had disciples.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. What is he talking of?

FIRST SOLDIER. We can never tell. Sometimes he says things that affright one, but it is impossible to understand what he says.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. May one see him?

FIRST SOLDIER. No. The Tetrarch has forbidden it.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. The Princess has hidden her face behind her fan! Her little white hands are fluttering like doves that fly to their dove-cots. They are like white butterflies. They are just like white butterflies.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. What is that to you? Why do you look at her? You must not look at her. Something terrible may happen.

THE CAPADOCIAN (*pointing to the cistern*). What a strange prison!

SECOND SOLDIER. It is an old cistern.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. An old cistern! That must be a poisonous place in which to dwell!

SECOND SOLDIER. Oh, no! For instance, the Tetrarch's brother, his elder brother, the first husband of Herodias, the Queen, was imprisoned there for twelve years. It did not kill him. At the end of the twelve years he had to be strangled.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. Strangled? Who dared to do that?

SECOND SOLDIER (*pointing to the executioner, a huge negro*). That man yonder, Naaman.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. He was not afraid?

SECOND SOLDIER. Oh, no! The Tetrarch sent him the ring.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. What ring?

SECOND SOLDIER. The death ring. So he was not afraid.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. Yet it is a terrible thing to strangle a king.

FIRST SOLDIER. Why? Kings have but one neck, like other folk.

THE CAPPADOCIAN. I think it terrible.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. The Princess is getting up! She is leaving the table! She looks very troubled. Ah, she is coming this way. Yes, she is coming towards us. How pale she is! Never have I seen her so pale.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. Do not look at her. I pray you not to look at her.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. She is like a dove that has strayed. She is like a narcissus trembling in the wind. She is like a silver flower. (*Enters Salome.*)

SALOME. I will not stay. I cannot stay. Why does the Tetrarch look at me all the while with his mole's eyes under his shaking eyelids? It is strange that the husband of my mother looks at me like that. I know not what it means. Of a truth, I know it too well.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. You have left the feast, Princess?

SALOME. How sweet is the air here! I can breathe here! Within there are Jews from Jerusalem who are tearing each other in pieces over their foolish ceremonies, and barbarians who drink and drink, and spill their wine on the pavement, and Greeks from Smyrna with painted eyes and painted cheeks, and frizzed hair curled in columns, and Egyptians silent and subtle, with

long nails of jade and russet cloaks, and Romans brutal and coarse, with their uncouth jargon. Ah! how I loathe the Romans! They are rough and common, and they give themselves the airs of noble lords.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Will you be seated, Princess?

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. Why do you speak to her? Oh! something terrible will happen. Why do you look at her?

SALOME. How good to see the moon! She is like a little piece of money, a little silver flower. She is cold and chaste. I am sure she is a virgin. She has the beauty of a virgin. Yes, she is a virgin. She has never defiled herself. She has never abandoned herself to men, like the other goddesses.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. Behold! the Lord hath come. The Son of Man is at hand. The centaurs have hidden themselves in the rivers, and the nymphs have left the rivers, and are lying beneath the leaves in the forests.

SALOME. Who was that who cried out?

SECOND SOLDIER. The prophet, Princess.

SALOME. Ah, the prophet! He of whom the Tetrarch is afraid?

SECOND SOLDIER. We know nothing of that,

Princess. It was the prophet Iokanaan who cried out.

THE YOUNG SOLDIER. Is it your pleasure that I bid them bring your litter, Princess? The night is fair in the garden.

SALOME. He says terrible things about my mother, does he not?

SECOND SOLDIER. We never understand what he says, Princess.

SALOME. Yes; he says terrible things about her. (*Enter a slave.*)

THE SLAVE. Princess, the Tetrarch prays you to return to the feast.

SALOME. I will not return.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Pardon me, Princess, but if you return not some misfortune may happen.

SALOME. Is he an old man, this prophet?

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess, it were better to return. Suffer me to lead you in.

SALOME. This prophet, is he an old man?

FIRST SOLDIER. No, Princess, he is quite young.

SECOND SOLDIER. One cannot be sure. There are those who say that he is Elias.

SALOME. Who is Elias?

SECOND SOLDIER. A prophet of this country in bygone days, Princess.

THE SLAVE. What answer may I give the Tetrarch from the Princess?

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. Rejoice not, O land of Palestine, because the rod of him who smote thee is broken. For from the seed of the serpent shall come a basilisk, and that which is born of it shall devour the birds.

SALOME. What a strange voice! I would speak with him.

FIRST SOLDIER. I fear it may not be, Princess. The Tetrarch does not suffer any one to speak with him. He has even forbidden the high priest to speak with him.

SALOME. I desire to speak with him.

FIRST SOLDIER. It is impossible, Princess.

SALOME. I will speak with him.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Would it not be better to return to the banquet?

SALOME. Bring forth this prophet. (*Exit the slave.*)

FIRST SOLDIER. We dare not, Princess.

SALOME (*approaching the cistern and looking down into it*). How black it is down there! It must be terrible to be in so black a hole! It is like a tomb. (*To the soldiers.*) Did you not hear me? Bring out the prophet. I would look on him.

SECOND SOLDIER. Princess, I beg you, do not require this of us.

SALOME. You are making me wait upon your pleasure.

FIRST SOLDIER. Princess, our lives belong to you, but we cannot do what you have asked of us. And indeed, it is not of us that you should ask this thing.

SALOME (*looking at the young Syrian*). Ah!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. Oh, what is going to happen? I am sure that something terrible will happen.

SALOME (*going up to the young Syrian*). Thou wilt do this thing for me, wilt thou not, Narraboth? Thou wilt do this thing for me. I have ever been kind towards thee. Thou wilt do it for me. I would but look at him, this strange prophet. Men have talked so much of him. Often I have heard the Tetrarch talk of him. I think he is afraid of him, the Tetrarch. Art thou, even thou, also afraid of him, Narraboth?

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. I fear him not, Princess; there is no man I fear. But the Tetrarch has formally forbidden that any man should raise the cover of this well.

SALOME. Thou wilt do this thing for me, Narraboth, and to-morrow when I pass in my litter

beneath the gateway of the idol-sellers I will let fall for thee a little flower, a little green flower.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess, I cannot, I cannot.

SALOME (*smiling*). Thou wilt do this thing for me, Narraboth. Thou knowest that thou wilt do this thing for me. And on the morrow when I shall pass in my litter by the bridge of the idol-buyers, I will look at thee through the muslin veils; I will look at thee, Narraboth; it may be I will smile at thee. Look at me, Narraboth; look at me. Ah! thou knowest that thou wilt do what I ask of thee. Thou knowest it. I know that thou wilt do this thing.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN (*signing to the third soldier*). Let the prophet come forth. The Princess Salome desires to see him.

SALOME. Ah!

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. Oh! How strange the moon looks! Like the hand of a dead woman who is seeking to cover herself with a shroud.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. She has a strange aspect! She is like a little Princess, whose eyes are eyes of amber. Through the clouds of muslin she is smiling like a little Princess. (*The prophet comes out of the cistern. Salome looks at him and steps slowly back.*)

IOKANAAN. Where is he whose cup of abom-

inations is now full? Where is he, who in a robe of silver shall one day die in the face of all the people? Bid him come forth, that he may hear the voice of him who hath cried in the waste places and in the houses of kings.

SALOME. Of whom is he speaking?

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. No one can tell, Princess.

IOKANAAN. Where is she who saw the images of men painted on the walls, even the images of the Chaldæans painted with colors, and gave herself up unto the lust of her eyes, and sent ambassadors into the land of the Chaldæa?

SALOME. It is of my mother that he is speaking.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Oh, no, Princess.

SALOME. Yes; it is of my mother that he is speaking.

IOKANAAN. Where is she who gave herself unto the Captains of Assyria, who have baldricks on their loins, and crowns of many colors on their heads? Where is she who hath given herself to the young men of the Egyptians, who are clothed in fine linen and hyacinth, whose shields are of gold, whose helmets are of silver, whose bodies are mighty? Go, bid her rise up from the bed of her abominations, from the bed of her incestuousness, that she may hear the words

of him who prepareth the way of the Lord, that she may repent of her iniquities. Though she will not repent, but will stick fast in her abominations, go bid her come, for the fan of the Lord is in His hand.

SALOME. Ah, but he is terrible, he is terrible!

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Do not stay here, Princess, I beseech you.

SALOME. It is his eyes above all that are terrible. They are like black holes burned by torches in the tapestry of Tyre. They are like the black cavern where the dragons live, the black caverns of Egypt, in which the dragons make their lairs. They are like black lakes troubled by fantastic moons. Do you think he will speak again?

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Do not stay here, Princess. I pray you do not stay here.

SALOME. How wasted he is! He is like a thin ivory statue. He is like an image of silver. I am sure he is chaste, as the moon is. He is like a moonbeam, like a shaft of silver. His flesh must be very cold, cold as ivory. I would look closer at him.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. No, no, Princess!

SALOME. I must look at him closer.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess! Princess!

IOKANAAN. Who is this woman who is looking at me? I will not have her look at me. Wherefore doth she look at me with her golden eyes, under her gilded eyelids? I know not who she is. I do not desire to know who she is. Bid her begone. It is not to her that I would speak.

SALOME. I am Salome, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judæa.

IOKANAAN. Back! daughter of Babylon! Come not near the chosen of the Lord. Thy mother hath filled the earth with the wine of her iniquities, and the cry of her sinning hath come up even to the ears of God.

SALOME. Speak again, Iokanaan. Thy voice is as music to mine ear.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess! Princess! Princess!

SALOME. Speak again! Speak again, Iokanaan, and tell me what I must do.

IOKANAAN. Daughter of Sodom, come not near me! But cover thy face with a veil, and scatter ashes upon thine head, and get thee to the desert, and seek out the Son of Man.

SALOME. Who is he, the Son of Man? Is he as beautiful as thou art, Iokanaan?

IOKANAAN. Get thee behind me! I hear in

the palace the beating of the wings of the angel of death.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess, I beseech thee to go within.

IOKANAAN. Angel of the Lord God, what dost thou here with thy sword? Whom seekest thou in the palace? The day of him who shall die in a robe of silver has not yet come.

SALOME. Iokanaan!

IOKANAAN. Who speaketh?

SALOME. I am amorous of thy body, Iokanaan! Thy body is white, like the lilies of the field that the mower hath never mowed. Thy body is white like the snows that lie on the mountains of Judæa, and come down into the valleys. The roses in the gardens of the Queen of Arabia are not so white as thy body. Neither the roses in the garden of the Queen of Arabia, the garden of spices of the Queen of Arabia, nor the feet of the dawn when they light on the leaves, nor the breast of the moon when she lies on the breast of the sea. There is nothing in this world so white as thy body. Suffer me to touch thy body.

IOKANAAN. Back! daughter of Babylon! By woman came evil into the world. Speak not to me. I will not listen to thee. I listen but to the voice of the Lord God.

SALOME. Thy body is hideous. It is like the body of a leper. It is like a plastered wall, where vipers have crawled; like a plastered wall where the scorpions have made their nest. It is like a whited sepulchre, full of loathsome things. It is horrible; thy body is horrible. It is of thy hair I am enamoured, Iokanaan. Thy hair is like clusters of grapes, like the clusters of black grapes that hang from the vine-trees of Edom in the land of the Edomites. Thy hair is like the cedars of Lebanon, like the great cedars of Lebanon that give their shade to the lions and to the robbers who would hide them by day. The long black nights, when the moon hides her face, when the stars are afraid, are not so black as thy hair. The silence that dwells in the forest is not so black. There is nothing in the world that is so black as thy hair. Suffer me to touch thy hair.

IOKANAAN. Back, daughter of Sodom! Touch me not. Profane not the temple of the Lord God.

SALOME. Thy hair is horrible. It is covered with mire and dust. It is like a crown of thorns placed on thy head. It is like a knot of serpents coiled round thy neck. I love not thy hair. It is thy mouth that I desire, Iokanaan. Thy mouth is like a band of scarlet on a tower of ivory.

It is like a pomegranate cut in twain with a knife of ivory. The pomegranate flowers that blossom in the gardens of Tyre, and are redder than roses, are not so red. The red blasts of trumpets that herald the approach of kings, and make afraid the enemy, are not so red. Thy mouth is redder than the feet of those who tread the wine in the wine-press. It is redder than the feet of the doves who inhabit the temples and are fed by the priests. It is redder than the feet of him who cometh from a forest where he hath slain a lion, and seen gilded tigers. Thy mouth is like a branch of coral that fishers have found in the twilight of the sea, the coral that they keep for the kings! It is like the vermilion that the Moabites find in the mines of Moab, the vermilion that the kings take from them. It is like the bow of the King of the Persians, that is tinted with vermilion, and is tipped with coral. There is nothing in the world so red as thy mouth. Suffer me to kiss thy mouth.

IOKANAAN. Never! daughter of Babylon! Daughter of Sodom! never!

SALOME. I will kiss thy mouth Iokanaan. I will kiss thy mouth.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Princess, Princess, thou who art like a garden of myrrh, thou who art the dove of all doves, look not at this man, look not

at him! Do not speak such words to him. I cannot endure it. Princess, do not speak these things.

SALOME. I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan.

THE YOUNG SYRIAN. Ah! (*He kills himself, and falls between Salome and Iokanaan.*)

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. The young Syrian has slain himself! The young captain has slain himself! He has slain himself who was my friend! I gave him a little box of perfumes and ear-rings wrought in silver, and now he has killed himself! Ah, did he not say that some misfortune would happen? I, too, said it, and it has come to pass. Well I knew that the moon was seeking a dead thing, but I knew not that it was he whom she sought. Ah! why did I not hide him from the moon? If I had hidden him in a cavern she would not have seen him.

FIRST SOLDIER. Princess, the young captain has just slain himself.

SALOME. Suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan.

IOKANAAN. Art thou not afraid, daughter of Herodias? Did I not tell thee that I heard in the palace the beating of the wings of the angel of death, and hath he not come, the angel of death?

SALOME. Suffer me to kiss thy mouth.

IOKANAAN. Daughter of adultery, there is but

one who can save thee. It is He of whom I spake. Go seek Him. He is in a bòat on the sea of Galilee, and He talketh with His disciples. Kneel down on the shore of the sea, and call unto Him by His name. When He cometh to thee, and to all who call on Him He cometh, bow thyself at His feet and ask of Him the remission of thy sins.

SALOME. Suffer me to kiss thy mouth.

IOKANAAN. Cursed be thou! Daughter of an incestuous mother, be thou accursed!

SALOME. I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan.

IOKANAAN. I will not look at thee. Thou art accursed, Salome; thou art accursed. (*He goes down into the cistern.*)

SALOME. I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. I will kiss thy mouth.

FIRST SOLDIER. We must bear away the body to another place. The Tetrarch does not care to see dead bodies, save the bodies of those whom he himself has slain.

THE PAGE OF HERODIAS. He was my brother, and nearer to me than a brother. I gave him a little box of perfumes, and a ring of agate that he wore always on his hand. In the evening we were wont to walk by the river, and among the almond-trees, and he used to tell me of the things of his country. He spake ever very low.

The sound of his voice was like the sound of the flute, of one who playeth upon the flute. Also he had much joy to gaze at himself in the river. I used to reproach him for that.

SECOND SOLDIER. You are right; we must hide the body. The Tetrarch must not see it.

FIRST SOLDIER. The Tetrarch will not come to this place. He never comes on the terrace. He is too much afraid of the prophet. (*Enter Herod, Herodias, and all the Court.*)

HEROD. Where is Salome? Where is the Princess? Why did she not return to the banquet as I commanded her? Ah! there she is!

HERODIAS. You must not look at her! You are always looking at her!

HEROD. The moon has a strange look tonight. Has she not a strange look? She is like a mad woman, and a mad woman who is seeking everywhere for lovers. She is naked, too. She is quite naked. The clouds are seeking to clothe her nakedness, but she will not let them. She shows herself naked in the sky. She reels through the clouds like a drunken woman. I am sure she is looking for lovers. Does she not reel like a drunken woman? She is like a mad woman, is she not?

HERODIAS. No; the moon is like the moon,

that is all. Let us go within. We have nothing to do here.

HEROD. I will stay here! Manasseh, lay carpets there. Light torches. Bring forth the ivory tables, and the tables of jasper. The air here is sweet. I will drink more wine with my guests. We must show all honor to the ambassadors of Cæsar.

HERODIAS. It is not because of them that you remain.

HEROD. Yes; the air is very sweet. Come, Herodias, our guests await us. Ah! I have slipped! I have slipped in blood! It is an ill omen. It is a very ill omen. Wherefore is there blood here? And this body, what does this body here? Think you I am like the King of Egypt, who gives no feast to his guests but that he shows them a corpse? Whose is it? I will not look on it.

FIRST SOLDIER. It is our captain, sire. It is the young Syrian whom you made captain of the guard but three days gone.

HEROD. I issued no order that he should be slain.

SECOND SOLDIER. He slew himself, sire.

HEROD. For what reason? I had made him captain of my guard!

SECOND SOLDIER. We do not know, sire. But with his own hand he slew himself.

HEROD. That seems strange to me. I had thought it was but the Roman philosophers who slew themselves. Is it not true, Tigellinus, that the philosophers at Rome slay themselves?

TIGELLINUS. There be some who slay themselves, sire. They are the Stoics. The Stoics are people of no cultivation. They are ridiculous people. I myself regard them as being perfectly ridiculous.

HEROD. I also. It is ridiculous to kill one's self.

TIGELLINUS. Everybody at Rome laughs at them. The Emperor has written a satire against them. It is recited everywhere.

HEROD. Ah! he has written a satire against them? Cæsar is wonderful. He can do everything. It is strange that the young Syrian has slain himself. I am sorry he has slain himself. I am very sorry. For he was fair to look upon. He was even very fair. He had very languorous eyes. I remember that I saw that he looked languorously at Salome. Truly, I thought he looked too much at her.

HERODIAS. There are others who look too much at her.

HEROD. His father was a king. I drove him

from his kingdom. And of his mother, who was a queen, you made a slave, Herodias. So he was here as my guest, as it were, and for that reason I made him my captain. I am sorry he is dead. Ho! why have you left the body here? It must be taken to some other place. I will not look at it,—away with it! (*They take away the body.*) It is cold here. There is a wind blowing. Is there not a wind blowing?

HERODIAS. No; there is no wind.

HEROD. I tell you there is a wind that blows. And I hear in the air something that is like the beating of wings, like the beating of vast wings. Do you not hear it?

HERODIAS. I hear nothing.

HEROD. I hear it no longer. But I heard it. It was the blowing of the wind. It has passed away. But no, I hear it again. Do you not hear it? It is just like a beating of wings.

HERODIAS. I tell you there is nothing. You are ill. Let us go within.

HEROD. I am not ill. It is your daughter who is sick to death. Never have I seen her so pale.

HERODIAS. I have told you not to look at her.

HEROD. Pour me forth wine. (*Wine is brought.*) Salome, come drink a little wine with me. I have here a wine that is exquisite. Cæsar

himself sent it me. Dip into it thy little red lips, that I may drain the cup.

SALOME. I am not thirsty, Tetrarch.

HEROD. You hear how she answers me, this daughter of yours?

HERODIAS. She does right. Why are you always gazing at her?

HEROD. Bring me ripe fruits. (*Fruits are brought.*) Salome, come and eat fruits with me. I love to see in a fruit the mark of thy little teeth. Bite but a little of this fruit, that I may eat what is left.

SALOME. I am not hungry, Tetrarch.

HEROD (*to Herodias*). You see how you have brought up this daughter of yours.

HERODIAS. My daughter and I come of a royal race. As for thee, thy father was a camel driver! He was a thief and a robber to boot!

HEROD. Thou liest!

HERODIAS. Thou knowest well that it is true.

HEROD. Salome, come and sit next to me. I will give thee the throne of thy mother.

SALOME. I am not tired, Tetrarch.

HERODIAS. You see in what regard she holds you.

HEROD. Bring me——What is it that I desire? I forget. Ah! ah! I remember.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. Behold, the time

is come! That which I foretold has come to pass. The day that I spake of is at hand.

HERODIAS. Bid him be silent. I will not listen to his voice. This man is forever hurling insults against me.

HEROD. He has said nothing against you. Besides, he is a very great prophet.

HERODIAS. I do not believe in prophets. Can a man tell what will come to pass? No man knows it. Also, he is forever insulting me. But I think you are afraid of him. I know well that you are afraid of him.

HEROD. I am not afraid of him. I am afraid of no man.

HERODIAS. I tell you you are afraid of him. If you are not afraid of him, why do you not deliver him to the Jews, who for these six months past have been clamoring for him?

A JEW. Truly, my lord, it were better to deliver him into our hands.

HEROD. Enough on this subject. I have already given you my answer. I will not deliver him into your hands. He is a holy man. He is a man who has seen God.

A JEW. That cannot be. There is no man who hath seen God since the prophet Elias. He is the last man who saw God face to face. In these days God doth not show Himself. God

hideth Himself. Therefore great evils have come upon the land.

ANOTHER JEW. Verily, no man knoweth if Elias the prophet did indeed see God. Peradventure it was but the shadow of God that he saw.

A THIRD JEW. God is at no time hidden. He showeth Himself at all times and in all places. God is in what is evil even as He is in what is good.

A FOURTH JEW. Thou shouldst not say that. It is a very dangerous doctrine. It is a doctrine that cometh from Alexandria, where men teach the philosophy of the Greeks. And the Greeks are Gentiles. They are not even circumsized.

A FIFTH JEW. No man can tell how God worketh. His ways are very dark. It may be that the things which we call evil are good, and that the things which we call good are evil. There is no knowledge of anything. We can but bow our heads to His will, for God is very strong. He breaketh in pieces the strong together with the weak, for He regardeth not any man.

FIRST JEW. Thou speakest truly. Verily, God is terrible. He breaketh in pieces the strong and the weak as men break corn in a mortar. But

as for this man, he hath never seen God. No man hath seen God since the prophet Elias.

HERODIAS. Make them be silent. They weary me.

HEROD. But I have heard it said that Iokanaan is in very truth your prophet Elias.

THE JEW. That cannot be. It is more than three hundred years since the days of the prophet Elias.

HEROD. There be some who say that this man is Elias the prophet.

A NAZARENE. I am sure that he is Elias the prophet.

THE JEW. Nay, but he is not Elias the prophet.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. Behold the day is at hand, the day of the Lord, and I hear upon the mountains the feet of Him who shall be the Saviour of the world.

HEROD. What does that mean? The Saviour of the world?

TIGELLINUS. It is a title that Cæsar adopts.

HEROD. But Cæsar is not coming into Judæa. Only yesterday I received letters from Rome. They contained nothing concerning this matter. And you, Tigellinus, who were at Rome during the winter, you heard nothing concerning this matter, did you?

TIGELLINUS. Sire, I heard nothing concerning the matter. I was but explaining the title. It is one of Cæsar's titles.

HEROD. But Cæsar cannot come. He is too gouty. They say that his feet are like the feet of an elephant. Also there are reasons of state. He who leaves Rome loses Rome. He will not come. Howbeit, Cæsar is lord, he will come if such be his pleasure. Nevertheless, I think he will not come.

FIRST NAZARENE. It was not concerning Cæsar that the prophet spake these words, sire.

HEROD. How?—it was not concerning Cæsar?

FIRST NAZARENE. No, my lord.

HEROD. Concerning whom then did he speak?

FIRST NAZARENE. Concerning Messias, who hath come.

A JEW. Messias hath not come.

FIRST NAZARENE. He hath come, and everywhere He worketh miracles!

HERODIAS. Ho! ho! miracles! I do not believe in miracles. I have seen too many. (*To the Page.*) My fan.

FIRST NAZARENE. This Man worketh true miracles. Thus, at a marriage which took place in a little town of Galilee, a town of some importance, He changed water into wine. Certain persons who were present related it to me. Also

He healed two lepers that were seated before the Gate of Capernaum simply by touching them.

SECOND NAZARENE. Nay; it was two blind men that He healed at Capernaum.

FIRST NAZARENE. Nay; they were lepers. But He hath healed blind people also, and He was seen on a mountain talking with angels.

A SADDUCEE. Angels do not exist.

A PHARISEE. Angels exist, but I do not believe that this Man has talked with them.

FIRST NAZARENE. He was seen by a great multitude of people talking with angels.

HERODIAS. How these men weary me! They are ridiculous! They are altogether ridiculous! (*To the Page.*) Well! my fan? (*The Page gives her the fan.*) You have a dreamer's look. You must not dream. It is only sick people who dream. (*She strikes the Page with her fan.*)

SECOND NAZARENE. There is also the miracle of the daughter of Jairus.

FIRST NAZARENE. Yea, that is sure. No man can gainsay it.

HERODIAS. Those men are mad. They have looked too long on the moon. Command them to be silent.

HEROD. What is this miracle of the daughter of Jairus?

FIRST NAZARENE. The daughter of Jairus was dead. This Man raised her from the dead.

HEROD. How! He raises people from the dead?

FIRST NAZARENE. Yea, sire; He raiseth the dead.

HEROD. I do not wish Him to do that. I forbid Him to do that. I suffer no man to raise the dead. This Man must be found and told that I forbid Him to raise the dead. Where is this Man at present?

SECOND NAZARENE. He is in every place, my lord, but it is hard to find Him.

FIRST NAZARENE. It is said that He is now in Samaria.

A JEW. It is easy to see that this is not Messias, if He is in Samaria. It is not to the Samaritans that Messias shall come. The Samaritans are accursed. They bring no offerings to the Temple.

SECOND NAZARENE. He left Samaria a few days since. I think that at the present moment He is in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem.

FIRST NAZARENE. No; He is not there. I have just come from Jerusalem. For two months they have had no tidings of Him.

HEROD. No matter! But let them find Him, and tell Him, thus saith Herod the King, 'I will

not suffer Thee to raise the dead.' To change water into wine, to heal the lepers and the blind. He may do these things if He will. I say nothing against these things. In truth I hold it a kindly deed to heal a leper. But no man shall raise the dead. It would be terrible if the dead came back.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. Ah! The wanton one! The harlot! Ah! the daughter of Babylon with her golden eyes and her gilded eyelids! Thus saith the Lord God. Let there come up against her a multitude of men. Let the people take stones and stone her.

HERODIAS. Command him to be silent!

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. Let the captains of the hosts pierce her with their swords, let them crush her beneath their shields.

HERODIAS. Nay, but it is infamous.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. It is thus that I will wipe out all wickedness from the earth, and that all women shall learn not to imitate her abominations.

HERODIAS. You hear what he says against me? You suffer him to revile her who is your wife!

HEROD. He did not speak your name.

HERODIAS. What does that matter? You

know well that it is I whom he seeks to revile. And I am your wife, am I not?

HEROD. Of a truth, dear and noble Herodias, you are my wife, and before that you were the wife of my brother.

HERODIAS. It was thou didst snatch me from his arms.

HEROD. Of a truth I was stronger than he was. But let us not talk of that matter. I do not desire to talk of it. It is the cause of the terrible words that the prophet has spoken. Peradventure on account of it a misfortune will come. Let us not speak of this matter. Noble Herodias, we are not mindful of our guests. Fill thou my cup, my well-beloved. Ho! fill with wine the great goblets of silver, and the great goblets of glass. I will drink to Cæsar. There are Romans here, we must drink to Cæsar.

ALL. Cæsar! Cæsar!

HEROD. Do you not see your daughter, how pale she is?

HERODIAS. What is it to you if she be pale or not?

HEROD. Never have I seen her so pale.

HERODIAS. You must not look at her.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. In that day the sun shall become black like sackcloth of hair, and the moon shall become like blood, and the stars

of the heaven shall fall upon the earth like unripe figs that fall from the fig-tree, and the kings of the earth shall be afraid.

HERODIAS. Ah! ah! I should like to see that day of which he speaks, when the moon shall become like blood, and when the stars shall fall upon the earth like unripe figs. This prophet talks like a drunken man, but I cannot suffer the sound of his voice. I hate his voice. Command him to be silent.

HEROD. I will not. I cannot understand what it is that he saith, but it may be an omen.

HERODIAS. I do not believe in omens. He speaks like a drunken man.

HEROD. It may be he is drunk with the wine of God.

HERODIAS. What wine is that, the wine of God? From what vineyards is it gathered? In what winepress may one find it?

HEROD. (*From this point he looks all the while at Salome.*) Tigellinus, when you were at Rome of late, did the Emperor speak with you on the subject of——?

TIGELLINUS. On what subject, my lord?

HEROD. On what subject? Ah! I asked you a question, did I not? I have forgotten what I would have asked you.

HERODIAS. You are looking again at my

daughter. You must not look at her. I have already said so.

HEROD. You say nothing else.

HERODIAS. I say it again.

HEROD. And that restoration of the Temple about which they have talked so much, will anything be done? They say that the veil of the Sanctuary has disappeared, do they not?

HERODIAS. It was thyself didst steal it. Thou speakest at random and without wit. I will not stay here. Let us go within.

HEROD. Dance for me, Salome.

HERODIAS. I will not have her dance.

SALOME. I have no desire to dance, Tetrarch.

HEROD. Salome, daughter of Herodias, dance for me.

HERODIAS. Peace. Let her alone.

HEROD. I command thee to dance, Salome.

SALOME. I will not dance, Tetrarch.

HERODIAS (*laughing*). You see how she obeys you.

HEROD. What is it to me whether she dance or not? It is nought to me. To-night I am happy. I am exceeding happy. Never have I been so happy.

FIRST SOLDIER. The Tetrarch has a sombre look. Has he not a sombre look?

SECOND SOLDIER. Yes, he has a sombre look.

HEROD. Wherefore should I not be happy? Cæsar, who is lord of the world, Cæsar, who is lord of all things, loves me well. He has just sent me most precious gifts. Also, he has promised me to summon to Rome the King of Cappadocia, who is mine enemy. It may be that at Rome he will crucify him, for he is able to do all things that he has a mind to do. Verily, Cæsar is lord. Therefore I do well to be happy. I am very happy; never have I been so happy. There is nothing in the world that can mar my happiness.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. He shall be seated on his throne. He shall be clothed in scarlet and purple. In his hand he shall bear a golden cup full of his blasphemies. And the angel of the Lord shall smite him. He shall be eaten of worms.

HERODIAS. You hear what he says about you. He says that you shall be eaten of worms.

HEROD. It is not of me that he speaks. He speaks never against me. It is of the King of Cappadocia that he speaks; the King of Cappadocia, who is mine enemy. It is he who shall be eaten of worms. It is not I. Never has he spoken word against me, this prophet, save that I sinned in taking to wife the wife of my brother.

It may be he is right. For, of truth, you are sterile.

HERODIAS. I am sterile, I? You say that, you that are ever looking at my daughter, you that would have her dance for your pleasure? You speak as a fool. I have borne a child. You have gotten no child, no, not on one of your slaves. It is you who are sterile, not I.

HEROD. Peace, woman! I say that you are sterile. You have borne me no child, and the prophet says that our marriage is not a true marriage. He says that it is a marriage of incest, a marriage that will bring evils. I fear he is right; I am sure that he is right. But it is not the hour to speak of these things. I would be happy at this moment. Of a truth, I am happy. There is nothing I lack.

HERODIAS. I am glad you are of so fair a humor to-night. It is not your custom. But it is late. Let us go within. Do not forget that we hunt at sunrise. All honors must be shown to Cæsar's ambassadors, must they not?

SECOND SOLDIER. The Tetrarch has a sombre look.

FIRST SOLDIER. Yes, he has a sombre look.

HEROD. Salome, Salome, dance for me. I pray thee dance for me. I am sad to-night. Yes, I am passing sad to-night. When I came

hither I slipped in blood, which is an ill omen; also I heard in the air a beating of wings, a beating of giant wings. I cannot tell what that may mean. I am sad to-night. Therefore dance for me. Dance for me, Salome, I beseech thee. If thou dancest for me thou mayest ask of me what thou wilt, and I will give it thee. Yes, dance for me, Salome, and whatsoever thou shalt ask of me I will give it thee, even unto the half of my kingdom.

SALOME (*rising*). Will you indeed give me whatsoever I shall ask of you, Tetrarch?

HERODIAS. Do not dance, my daughter.

HEROD. Whatsoever thou shalt ask of me, even unto the half of my kingdom.

SALOME. You swear it, Tetrarch?

HEROD. I swear it, Salome.

HERODIAS. Do not dance, my daughter.

SALOME. By what will you swear this thing, Tetrarch?

HEROD. By my life, by my crown, by my gods. Whatsoever thou shalt desire I will give it thee, even to the half of my kingdom, if thou wilt but dance for me. O Salome, Salome, dance for me!

SALOME. You have sworn an oath, Tetrarch.

HEROD. I have sworn an oath.

HERODIAS. My daughter, do not dance.

HEROD. Even to the half of my kingdom. Thou wilt be passing fair as a queen, Salome, if it please thee to ask for the half of my kingdom. Will she not be fair as a queen? Ah! it is cold here! There is an icy wind, and I hear—wherefore do I hear in the air this beating of wings? Ah! one might fancy a huge black bird that hovers over the terrace. Why can I not see it, this bird? The beat of its wings is terrible. The breath of the wind of its wings is terrible. It is a chill wind. Nay, but it is not cold, it is hot. I am choking. Pour water on my hands. Give me snow to eat. Loosen my mantle. Quick! quick! loosen my mantle. Nay, but leave it. It is my garland that hurts me, my garland of roses. The flowers are like fire. They have burned my forehead. (*He tears the wreath from his head, and throws it on the table.*) Ah! I can breathe now. How red those petals are! They are like stains of blood on the cloth. That does not matter. It is not wise to find symbols in everything that one sees. It makes life too full of terrors. It were better to say that stains of blood are as lovely as rose-petals. It were better far to say that—— But we will not speak of this. Now I am happy. I am passing happy. Have I not the right to be happy? Your daughter is going to dance for me. Wilt thou not

dance for me, Salome? Thou hast promised to dance for me.

HERODIAS. I will not have her dance.

SALOME. I will dance for you, Tetrarch.

HEROD. You hear what your daughter says. She is going to dance for me. Thou doest well to dance for me, Salome. And when thou hast danced for me, forget not to ask of me whatsoever thou hast a mind to ask. Whatsoever thou shalt desire I will give it thee, even to the half of my kingdom. I have sworn it, have I not?

SALOME. Thou hast sworn it, Tetrarch.

HEROD. And I have never failed of my word. I am not of those who break their oaths. I know not how to lie. I am the slave of my word, and my word is the word of a king. The King of Cappadocia had ever a lying tongue, but he is no true king. He is a coward. Also he owes me money that he will not repay. He has even insulted my ambassadors. He has spoken words that were wounding. But Cæsar will crucify him when he comes to Rome. I know that Cæsar will crucify him. And if he crucify him not, yet will he die, being eaten of worms. The prophet has prophesied it. Well! Wherefore dost thou tarry, Salome?

SALOME. I am waiting until my slaves bring perfumes to me and the seven veils, and take

from off my feet my sandals. (*Slaves bring perfumes and the seven veils, and take off the sandals of Salome.*)

HEROD. Ah, thou art to dance with naked feet! 'Tis well! 'Tis well! Thy little feet will be like white doves. They will be little white flowers that dance upon the trees. No, no, she is going to dance on blood! There is blood spilt on the ground. She must not dance on blood. It were an evil omen.

HERODIAS. What is it to thee if she dance on blood? Thou hast waded deep enough in it.

HEROD. What is it to me? Ah! look at the moon! She has become red. She has become red as blood. Ah! the prophet prophesied truly. He prophesied that the moon would become as blood. Did he not prophesy it? All of ye heard him prophesying it. And now the moon has become as blood. Do ye not see it?

HERODIAS. Oh, yes, I see it well, and the stars are falling like unripe figs, are they not? And the sun is becoming black like sackcloth of hair, and the kings of the earth are afraid. That, at least, one can see. The prophet is justified of his words in that at least, for truly the kings of the earth are afraid. Let us go within. You are sick. They will say at Rome that you are mad. Let us go within, I tell you.

THE VOICE OF IOKANAAN. Who is this who cometh from Edom, who is this who cometh from Bozra, whose raiment is dyed with purple, who shineth in the beauty of his garments, who walketh mighty in his greatness? Wherefore is thy raiment stained with scarlet?

HERODIAS. Let us go within. The voice of that man maddens me. I will not have my daughter dance while he is continually crying out. I will not have her dance while you look at her in this fashion. In a word, I will not have her dance.

HEROD. Do not rise, my wife, my queen; it will avail thee nothing. I will not go within till she hath danced. Dance, Salome, dance for me.

HERODIAS. Do not dance, my daughter.

SALOME. I am ready, Tetrarch. (*Salome dances the dance of the seven veils.*)

HEROD. Ah! wonderful! wonderful! You see that she has danced for me, your daughter. Come near, Salome, come near, that I may give thee thy fee. Ah! I pay a royal price to those who dance for my pleasure. I will pay thee royally. I will give thee whatsoever thy soul desireth. What wouldst thou have? Speak.

SALOME (*kneeling*). I would that they presently bring me in a silver charger——

HEROD (*laughing*). In a silver charger?

Surely yes, in a silver charger. She is charming, is she not? What is it that thou wouldst have in a silver charger, O sweet and fair Salome, thou that are fairer than all the daughters of Judæa? What wouldst thou have them bring thee in a silver charger? Tell me. Whatsoever it may be, thou shalt receive it. My treasures belong to thee. What is that thou wouldst have, Salome?

SALOME (*rising*). The head of Iokanaan.

HERODIAS. Ah! that is well said, my daughter.

HEROD. No, no!

HERODIAS. That is well said, my daughter.

HEROD. No, no, Salome. It is not that thou desirest. Do not listen to thy mother's voice. She is ever giving thee evil counsel. Do not heed her.

SALOME. It is not my mother's voice that I heed. It is for mine own pleasure that I ask the head of Iokanaan in a silver charger. You have sworn an oath, Herod. Forget not that you have sworn an oath.

HEROD. I know it. I have sworn an oath by my gods. I know it well. But I pray thee, Salome, ask of me something else. Ask of me the half of my kingdom, and I will give it thee. But ask not of me what thy lips have asked.

SALOME. I ask of you the head of Iokanaan.

HEROD. No, no; I will not give it thee.

SALOME. You have sworn an oath, Herod.

HERODIAS. Yes, you have sworn an oath. Everybody heard you. You swore it before everybody.

HEROD. Peace, woman! It is not to you I speak

HERODIAS. My daughter has done well to ask the head of Iokanaan. He has covered me with insults. He has said unspeakable things against me One can see that she loves her mother well. Do not yield, my daughter. He has sworn an oath; he has sworn an oath.

HEROD. Peace! Speak not to me! Salome, I pray thee be not stubborn. I have ever been kind toward thee. I have ever loved thee. It may be that I have loved thee too much. Therefore ask not this thing of me. This is a terrible thing, an awful thing to ask of me. Surely, I think thou art jesting. The head of a man that is cut form his body is ill to look upon, is it not? It is not meet that the eyes of a virgin should look upon such a thing. What pleasure couldst thou have in it? There is no pleasure that thou couldst have in it. No, no; it is not that thou desirest. Hearken to me. I have an emerald, a great emerald and round, that the minion of Cæsar has sent unto me. When thou lookest through this emerald thou canst see that which

passeth afar off. Cæsar himself carries such an emerald when he goes to the circus. But my emerald is the larger. I know well that it is the larger. It is the largest emerald in the whole world. Thou wilt take that, wilt thou not? Ask it of me and I will give it thee.

SALOME. I demand the head of Iokanaan.

HEROD. Thou are not listening. Thou art not listening. Suffer me to speak, Salome.

SALOME. The head of Iokanaan!

HEROD. No, no, thou wouldst not have that. Thou sayest that but to trouble me, because that I have looked at thee and ceased not this night. It is true, I have looked at thee and ceased not this night. Thy beauty has troubled me. Thy beauty has grievously troubled me, and I have looked at thee overmuch. Nay, but I will look at thee no more. One should not look at anything. Neither at things, nor at people should one look. Only in mirrors is it well to look, for mirrors do but show us masks. Oh! oh! bring wine! I thirst! Salome, Salome, let us be as friends. Bethink thee—— Ah! what would I say? What was't? Ah! I remember it! Salome,—nay, but come nearer to me; I fear thou wilt not hear my words,—Salome, thou knowest my white peacocks, my beautiful white peacocks, that walk in the garden between the myr-

tles and the tall cypress-trees. Their beaks are gilded with gold, and the grains that they eat are smeared with gold, and their feet are stained with purple. When they cry out the rain comes, and the moon shows herself in the heavens when they spread their tails. Two by two, they walk between the cypress-trees and the black myrtles, and each has a slave to tend it. Sometimes they fly across the trees, and anon they couch in the grass, and round the pools of the water. There are not in all the world birds so wonderful. I know that Cæsar himself has no birds so fair as my birds. I will give thee fifty of my peacocks. They will follow thee whithersoever thou goest, and in the midst of them thou wilt be like unto the moon in the midst of a great white cloud. I will give them to thee, all. I have but a hundred, and in the whole world there is no king who has peacocks like unto my peacocks. But I will give them all to thee. Only thou must loose me from my oath, and must not ask of me that which thy lips have asked of me. (*He empties the cup of wine.*)

SALOME. Give me the head of Iokanaan.

HERODIAS. Well said, my daughter! As for you, you are ridiculous with your peacocks.

HEROD. Peace! you are always crying out. You cry out like a beast of prey. You must not

cry in such fashion. Your voice wearies me. Peace, I tell you! Salome, think on what thou art doing. It may be that this man comes from God. He is a holy man. The finger of God has touched him. God has put terrible words into his mouth. In the palace, as in the desert, God is ever with him! It may be that He is, at least. One cannot tell, but it is possible that God is with him and for him. If he die also, peradventure some evil may befall me. Verily, he has said that evil will befall some one on the day whereon he dies. On whom should it fall if it fall not on me? Remember, I slipped in blood when I came hither. Also did I not hear the beating of wings in the air, a beating of vast wings? These are ill omens. And there were other things. I am sure there were other things, though I saw them not. Thou wouldst not that some evil should befall me, Salome? Listen to me again.

SALOME. Give me the head of Iokanaan!

HEROD. Ah! thou art not listening to me. Be calm. As for me, am I not calm? I am altogether calm. Listen. I have jewels hidden in this place—jewels that thy mother even has never seen; jewels that are marvelous to look at. I have a collar of pearls, set in four rows. They are like unto moons chained with rays of silver.

They are even as half a hundred moons caught in a golden net. On the ivory breast of a queen they have rested. Thou shalt be as fair as a queen when thou wearest them. I have amethysts of two kinds; one that is black like wine, and one that is red like wine that one has colored with water. I have topazes yellow as are the eyes of tigers, and topazes that are pink as the eyes of a wood-pigeon, and green topazes that are as the eyes of cats. I have opals that burn always, with a flame that is cold as ice, opals that make sad men's minds, and are afraid of the shadows. I have onyxes like the eyeballs of a dead woman. I have moonstones that change when the moon changes, and are wan when they see the sun. I have sapphires big like eggs, and as blue as blue flowers. The sea wanders within them, and the moon comes never to trouble the blue of their waves. I have chrysolites and beryls, and chrysoprases and rubies; I have sardonyx and hyacinth stones, and stones of chalcedony, and I will give them all unto thee, all, and other things will I add to them. The King of the Indies has but even now sent me four fans fashioned from the feathers of parrots, and the King of Numidia a garment of ostrich feathers. I have a crystal, into which it is not lawful for a woman to look, nor may young

men behold it until they have been beaten with rods. In a coffer of nacre I have three wondrous turquoises. He who wears them on his forehead can imagine things which are not, and he who carries them in his hand can turn the fruitful woman into a woman that is barren. These are great treasures. They are treasures above all price. But this is not all. In an ebony coffer I have two cups of amber that are like apples of pure gold. If an enemy pour poison into these cups they become like apples of silver. In a coffer incrusted with amber I have sandals incrusted with glass. I have mantles that have been brought from the land of the Seres, and bracelets decked about with carbuncles and with jade that come from the city of Euphrates. What desirest thou more than this, Salome? Tell me the thing that thou desirest, and I will give it thee. All that thou askest I will give thee, save one thing only. I will give thee all that is mine, save only the life of one man. I will give thee the mantle of the high priest. I will give thee the veil of the sanctuary.

THE JEWS. Oh! oh!

SALOME. Give me the head of Iokanaan!

HEROD (*sinking back in his seat*). Let her be given what she asks! Of a truth she is her mother's child! (*The first soldier approaches.*

Herodias draws from the hand of the Tetrarch the ring of death, and gives it to the soldier, who straightway bears it to the executioner. The executioner looks scared.) Who has taken my ring? There was a ring on my right hand. Who has drunk my wine? There was wine in my cup. It was full of wine. Some one has drunk it! Oh! surely some evil will befall some one. (*The executioner goes down into the cistern.*) Ah! wherefore did I give my oath? Hereafter let no king swear an oath. If he keep it not, it is terrible, and if he keep it, it is terrible also.

HERODIAS. My daughter has done well.

HEROD. I am sure that some misfortune will happen.

SALOMÉ (*she leans over the cistern and listens*). There is no sound. I hear nothing. Why does he not cry out, this man? Ah! if any man sought to kill me, I would cry out, I would struggle, I would not suffer. Strike, strike, Naaman, strike, I tell you! No, I hear nothing. There is a silence, a terrible silence. Ah! something has fallen upon the ground. I heard something fall. It was the sword of the executioner. He is afraid, this slave. He has dropped his sword. He dares not kill him. He is a coward, this slave! Let soldiers be sent. (*She sees*

s and addresses him.) Come
: the friend of him who is
? Well, I tell thee, there are
igh. Go to the soldiers and
and bring me the thing I ask,
rarch has promised me, the
:. (*The page recoils. She*
s.) Hither, ye soldiers. Get
:istern and bring me the head
irch, Tetrarch, command your
bring me the head of Iока-
'ack arm, the arm of the exe-
rth from the cistern, bearing
he head of Iokanaan. Salome
seizes u. ... *hides his face with his cloak. Herodias smiles and fans herself. The Nazarenes fall on their knees and begin to pray.*)
Ah! thou wouldst not suffer me to kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. Well! I will kiss it now. I will bite it with my teeth as one bites a ripe fruit. Yes, I will kiss thy mouth, Iokanaan. I said it; did I not say it? I said it. Ah! I will kiss it now. But wherefore dost thou not look at me, Iokanaan? Thine eyes that were so terrible, so full of rage and scorn, are shut now. Wherefore are they shut? Open thine eyes! Lift up thine eyelids, Iokanaan! Wherefore dost thou not look at me? Art thou afraid of

me, Iokanaan, that thou wilt not look at me? And thy tongue, that was like a red snake darting poison, it moves no more, it speaks no words, Iokanaan, that scarlet viper that spat its venom upon me. It is strange, is it not? How is it that the red viper stirs no longer? Thou wouldst have none of me, Iokanaan. Thou rejectedest me. Thou didst speak evil words against me. Thou didst bear thyself toward me as to a harlot, as to a woman that is a wanton, to me, Salome, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judæa! Well, I still live, but thou art dead, and thy head belongs to me. I can do with it what I will. I can throw it to the dogs and to the birds of the air. That which the dogs leave, the birds of the air shall devour. Ah, Iokanaan, Iokanaan, thou wert the man that I loved alone among men! All other men were hateful to me. But thou were beautiful! Thy body was a column of ivory set upon feet of silver. It was a garden full of doves and lilies of silver. It was a tower of silver decked with shields of ivory. There was nothing in the world so white as thy body. There was nothing in the world so black as thy hair. In the whole world there was nothing so red as thy mouth. Thy voice was a censer that scattered strange perfumes, and when I looked on thee I heard a strange music. Ah!

wherefore didst thou not look at me, Iokanaan? With the cloak of thine hands, and with the cloak of thy blasphemies thou didst hide thy face. Thou didst put upon thine eyes the covering of him who would see God. Well, thou hast seen thy God, Iokanaan, but me, me, thou didst never see. If thou hadst seen me thou hadst loved me. I saw thee, and I loved thee. Oh, how I loved thee! I love thee yet, Iokanaan. I love only thee. I am athirst for thy beauty; I am hungry for thy body; and neither wine nor apples can appease my desire. What shall I do now, Iokanaan? Neither the floods nor the great waters can quench my passion. I was a princess, and thou didst scorn me. I was a virgin, and thou didst take my virginity from me. I was chaste, and thou didst fill my veins with fire. Ah! ah! wherefore didst thou not look at me? If thou hadst looked at me thou hadst loved me. Well I know that thou wouldst have loved me, and the mystery of Love is greater than the mystery of Death.

HEROD. She is monstrous, thy daughter; I tell thee she is monstrous. In truth, what she has done is a great crime. I am sure that it is a crime against some unknown God.

HERODIAS. I am well pleased with my daugh-

ter. She has done well. And I would stay here now.

HEROD (*rising*). Ah! There speaks my brother's wife! Come! I will not stay in this place. Come, I tell thee. Surely some terrible thing will befall. Manasseh, Issachar, Ozias, put out the torches. I will not look at things, I will not suffer things to look at me. Put out the torches! Hide the moon! Hide the stars! Let us hide ourselves in our palace, Herodias. I begin to be afraid. (*The slaves put out the torches. The stars disappear. A great cloud crosses the moon and conceals it completely. The stage becomes quite dark. The Tetrarch begins to climb the staircase.*)

THE VOICE OF SALOME. Ah! I have kissed thy mouth, Iokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth. There was a bitter taste on thy lips. Was it the taste of blood? Nay; but perchance it was the taste of love. They say that love hath a bitter taste. But what matter? what matter? I have kissed thy mouth, Iokanaan, I have kissed thy mouth. (*A ray of moonlight falls on Salome and illumines her.*)

HEROD (*turning round and seeing Salome*). Kill that woman! (*The soldiers rush forward and crush beneath their shields Salome, daughter of Herodias, Princess of Judaea.*)

CURTAIN.